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Cinemonkey

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HITCHCOCK



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YOU LISTEN TO OTHERS BUT YOU THINK WHAT YOU WANT

Why would anyone want to name a film magazine after a pun in a short story by Vladimir Nabokov?

Because it appealed to us.

To paraphrase Charles Foster Kane, we don't know how to run a film magazine, we just try everything we can think of.

We don't believe in turning down a piece that we like simply because it is too long, or goes against editorial policy. For one thing, we don't have an editorial policy, except to print things we like. From a satire on a certain French film actor, to a piece on Bruce Springsteen; from a description of how hard it is to get to a movie in London after ten o'clock, to a short story about kids and movies; if it has something to do with film, and we like it, we'll run it.

Which isn't to say we don't take ourselves seriously. We do. In fact, we even call ourselves a "serious film journal," just in case you couldn't tell with a title like *Cinemonkey*. It bothers a lot of people when we call ourselves "serious," but we don't care. We're a film magazine, not a slice of Melba toast. We believe in freedom of thought, and film people like to talk with each other about what they think. *Cinemonkey* admires this independence of opinion, and we hope we appeal to people who might not necessarily agree with us. You listen to others, but you think what you want.

Cinemonkey is interested in a variety of ideas and approaches. Here are some of the articles we have already printed:

- A defense of William Friedkin's *Sorcerer*.
- The transcript of Godard and Gorin's *Letter to Jane*.
- Ted Price's brilliant article on *The Passenger*, already considered one of the best pieces on the film yet written.
- A sad tribute to Jerry's Market during its last days on earth. (*Jerry's Market?*)
- A debate (more like a catfight) over Brian De Palma's *The Fury*.
- Cartoon parodies of films like *A Wedding*, *Pretty Baby*, and *Get Out Your Handkerchiefs*.
- David Coursen's review of a book on Huston that becomes a brilliant defense of the director's work.
- A rave review of *Corvette Summer*.
- Excellent explications of auteurism by William Cadbury and Leland Poague.
- A piece on *Halloween* and *Culture of Narcissism*.
- A racy appreciation of Bulle Ogier.
- A revaluation of Murnau's last American film, *City Girl*.
- Some straight shooting on *The Deer Hunter*.
- An insightful interview with Russ Meyer, whom Jean-Pierre Gorin called the best American film director.
- A discussion of the organic symbolism in *Eraserhead*.

We won't even mention the pieces on *Chinatown*, *Mean Streets*, *Mizoguchi*, *The Driver*, *Ophuls*, *Wilder*, *Spellbound*, *Big Wednesday*, *Hardcore*, *Interiors*, *Herzog*, *The Warriors*, *The China Syndrome*, *Days of Heaven*. That would be bragging, so we won't mention them.

Cinemonkey comes out about four times a year. Usually. For some people that isn't enough. For others it's too much.

Cinemonkey is also in the fine tradition of polemical film magazines. We wish there were more of them. Maybe you'll dislike *Cinemonkey* enough to start your own film journal, then we can all cause a little trouble together.

But you've got to start somewhere. *Cinemonkey* costs seven dollars a year, which is cheaper than a college education, and might even give you something to think about. *Cinemonkey* wants people to think.

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Cover: Éléonora Klarwein

Notes

Letter of Resignation

By common consent, last year was the worst year for movies within recent memory . . . but I wrote that sentence around this time last year (and ended, "unless one remembers the year before, and the year before that"). So what am I doing, still at the movies—looking, to be sure, but looking for what? Not for masterpieces, surely, unless I'm drawn to existential exercises in futility. For though the task of reviewing films regularly often seems enough to send its practitioners giddily enrolling in the masterpiece-of-the-month club, I recently finished a seven-year go at the job feeling I'd covered one new film—*The Discrete Charm of the Bourgeoisie*—regarding which the designation "masterpiece" seemed compellingly called for. And yet surely the movies must amount to something more than an insular masterpiece surrounded by a sea of "moments," however memorable and privileged those moments, at best may be. Have I, perhaps, been seeing the wrong movies?

I have, it's true, been seeing fewer movies, and where I once (in my amateur enthusiasm) welcomed the opening of every new movie that promised some justification for going to see it, I've come (in my quasi-professionalism) to greet each new movie that offers a reason (Ken Russell as director, another film by Bergman "merging dreams and reality," or one more lightweight "charmer" from Truffaut) to stay away, as less and less of my moviegoing has come to fall into a shrinking sphere of pleasure, and more and more into an expanding domain of duty—a fact I was struck by once again when I realized I'd recently contrived to divide my time between New York and San Francisco in such a way as to insure my missing the film festivals in both cities. (Film festivals, in any case, have degenerated for me in recent years into

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bouts of narcolepsy: the body rebels even if the will persists.) Of course, avoiding movies, of even the most apparently dispensable sort, has its perils also: the CB-radio or dismemberment movie one thought safely allowed to pass by today may turn up at a film festival or the Museum of Modern Art tomorrow, and then have to be inconveniently pursued to some fugitive resurfacing—the converse, perhaps, of the more common situation of the latest art-house rage turning out to be (like *Seven Beauties*) the medium's truly dispensable swill. And this state of chaos—with the best films sometimes arriving with the least fanfare, and vice versa—is probably as it should be, given the still unsettled questions of what's good and what isn't in this mongrel upstart of the arts.

Sometimes, however, the eventual price to be paid for a dereliction of one's duty may be harder to calculate beforehand. Take, for instance, the case of one R.W. Fassbinder. Several years ago, I saw *The Merchant of Four Seasons*, the first (I believe) of Fassbinder's films to move on from its niche at the New York Festival to a theater, and a film then and even now still generally regarded as Fassbinder's best. *The Merchant of Four Seasons* struck me as essentially a Bressonian (late Bresson, I scrupulously specify) zombie movie, and left me prepared to write off Fassbinder as a subject on which I preferred to maintain my ignorance—one, increasingly, among many for me. And I've seen little of Fassbinder's since (having seen *nothing* of Fassbinder's since) to alter my first impression (of an essentially *kitsch* mentality allied with an affectlessly "modern" sensibility and the affectation of an offhanded indifference to verisimilitude for which the obligatory buzz word is "Brechtian"), an impression given some confirmation for me by James Wolcott's characterization of a recent Fassbinder retrospective as (borrowing the title of a Chevy Chase skit) "physical exercise for the dead." But little did I realize, when I first decided to allow Fassbinder's work to remain an area of ignorance, just how vast

that area would grow to be, given a director of a truly prodigious and hateful prolificacy, who, even as I write these words, has made twelve more movies. Nor, even in my wildest imaginings, could I have foreseen just how torridly fashionable an item Fassbinder would become. And now, for me to catch up with the Fassbinder I've let go by would amount to a life's work, and very likely not nice work either. Yet just as I'm about to retreat before the obviously Herculean awesomeness of such an undertaking, that Fassbinder retrospective starts traveling from New York in my direction, and I'm faced with deciding whether it would be worse to preserve my hard-won ignorance or to dive headlong into the current.

Could I be wrong about Fassbinder? Of course, I could be wrong; I've overcome, after all, my initial aversion to Fassbinder's compatriot, Werner Herzog, to the point of actually enjoying his latest work, *Stroszek*, though without thinking its stacked-deck anti-Americanism and Diane Arbus-like grotesquerie the last word in profundity, or retrospectively warming any to Herzog's grating early work, or forgetting the experiences of fidgeting through *Kasper Hauser* and *Aquirre* while waiting for them to come to life (as the latter film excitingly does in its densely packed last ten minutes), or really changing my opinion as the the fundamental ungainliness of Herzog's directorial style itself. (A preoccupation with the grotesque may make for an artistic "vision," but, until the end of *Aquirre* and *Stroszek*, it remains, in Herzog's case, a static because undramatized vision.) And I've transcended my skepticism about the nascent German cinema in general to the point of thinking Wim Wender's *Alice in the Cities* the best new film (it was actually made in 1973) I've seen thus far this year.

But the point really is less the question of whether Fassbinder is good or bad than why I, as a combat veteran of the great Godard-and-Antonioni wars of the early sixties, should be so willing to let that question go unanswered, so little impelled to see more of Fassbinder's work as to forfeit my right to a critic's most zealously prized possession: an opinion. In part, this may merely be a case of something akin to jazz's moldy-fig syndrome: that phenomenon whereby each generation of jazz lovers denounces the music of the succeeding one for its deviation from the true, "classic" essence of the art form. (I was recently surprised to hear a politically liberal news commentator still dismissing, as illegitimate cacophony, the bop of Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, my idea of a true jazz "classicism" if ever there was one.) Perhaps, having championed one *avant-garde* in film, I simply lack the mental suppleness and stamina to master the difficulties of another (no less, a perennial) one: having grappled with Godard, I leave it for others to take on Fass-

(Continued on page 34.)

Hitchcock

AND THE ETHICS OF VISION

A Metareading*

by Leland A. Poague

This monograph essays a double task. The first is a broad thematic "metareading" of the cinema of Alfred Hitchcock. Here I am concerned to determine and describe the "deep structure" logic of the Hitchcock cinema as it is revealed in plot, in iconography, and in character. The second task, providing a theoretical context for the first, is to consider certain of the premises underlying the very process of my reading: what are the terms and conditions of my relationship to Hitchcock's films?

In this latter respect the essay owes much to readings and discussions undertaken while participating in a National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar on "The Classical Narrative Cinema and Modernist Alternatives" directed by Professor David Bordwell at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Three texts in particular

served as models or catalysts for my own practice: the *Cahiers du Cinéma* reading of Young Mr. Lincoln, Stephen Heath's two-part critique of *Touch of Evil* in *Screen*, and Roland Barthes's reading of Balzac's "Sarrasine" in *S/Z*.¹ I am certainly very much at odds with many of the positions they take. I still believe in the efficacy of New Criticism (in literary studies) and auteur criticism (in film studies). But I sought in writing this essay to submit those methodologies to the same sort of extended, self-critical examination undertaken, within other frameworks, by people like Heath and Barthes. To be sure, I locate my argument by reference to the specific (and important) theoretical problem of the relationship of spectator to text, which means that I seldom refer directly to *Cahiers*, Heath, or Barthes. But their essays were always on my desk and in my mind

while I wrote this piece and they provide the larger context within which the essay ought to be read—as one metareading among several.

* My primary critical debts are acknowledged in the text and the notes. More personal thanks are due to my fellow NEH seminarians, especially David Bordwell, Jim Jukak, Bill Bywater, and Robert Self; and to Charles L.P. Silet, Douglas Catron, and Gary Hooper—all of whom read significant portions of the manuscript. Their comments are much appreciated and were very helpful. Not that they all agree with everything I say; but in thinking through their comments I have been forced to refine my approach and retest my conclusions. Thanks are also due to Richard Gollin, for his suggestions regarding *The Birds*, and to Douglas Holm and Frank Haggard, for their encouragement and support. This essay is dedicated to Rudy and Sylvia Rucker: artists, philosophers, and friends.

I. The Problem Specified

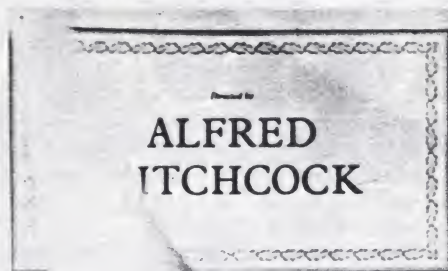
It no doubt attests to the complexity of the issue that film scholarship has only recently addressed itself in any thorough going manner to the problem of "the spectator in the text."² Realist film theory, while hardly silent on the matter of spectator perception, sidestepped the issue by subsuming the viewer/screen relationship within the larger compass of the spectator's relationship to the world as a whole. Thus André Bazin, in the original version of his Orson Welles monograph and in his essay on "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," takes the "analytical montage" of classical continuity editing to task on the grounds that it "totally suppresses [the] reciprocal freedom between us and the object" and substitutes "a forced breaking down [of the scene] where the logic of the shots controlled by the reporting of the action *anesthetizes* our freedom" (my italics).³ Of course, analytical montage may precisely replicate our habitual (conventional) patterns of attention: hence the "transparency" of analytical montage. But in either case, in our perception of cinema or in our perception of the world at large, habitual modes of attention falsify the possibilities of perception and betray the ontology not only of cinema but of sight itself. That is, our attention to reality need not nor ought to be guided by unseen hands or conventional habits. Rather, we see the world whole, in depth, and are free (if we wish) to choose our focal point, whereas the dramatic editing of the silent era directed or authorized our attention along fairly simple narrative/dramatic lines. For Bazin, then, the Hollywood cinema is blatantly unrealistic, in terms of its technology and in the ontology of viewer perception; and the alternative was Orson Welles—whose use of extreme deep focus photography marked him as the cinematic realist par excellence, despite his quite obvious and baroque lighting schemes and despite his frequent temporal/spatial disjunctions, because our perception of Welles's deep focus sequences is so much more analogous to our perception of the everyday world.

Auteurist film scholarship, on the other hand, seldom fell into Bazin's ontological trap. There was never any question among most of the first generation auteur critics that the "reality" of a film was indeed "authorized," reflecting the film-maker's vision of the world as mediated by his own sense of reality and ideology. Therefore, one visual style could hardly be preferred to another—as Bazin preferred that of Welles to, say, that of Eisenstein—on ontological grounds. The point of most auteurist scholarship was exactly to prove the presence of an authorial signature by demonstrating how thoroughly self-contained and self-expressive a film-maker's world could be. And if the question of the

spectator's role came up it was handled in terms which accorded by and large (and not illegitimately) with the phenomenology of literature, where the temptation to praise realism (in the literal sense) is far weaker and therefore less problematic.

Recent developments in film theory have turned Bazin upside down and have confirmed the essential wisdom of the auteurist position. Readers familiar with recent articles in *Film Quarterly* and *Screen* will recognize "system of the suture" arguments as a Brechtian rehash of Bazin's position. That is, critics like Dayan and Oudart are now arguing that the Hollywood narrative film represents a sort of ontological falsehood, for suggesting that "reality" is readily viewable, that vision is not problematic or ideologically determined, that the world "as it is" (or "as it is photographed") is unchangeable.⁴ To a certain degree, of course, the position is the exact reverse of Bazin. For Dayan the Hollywood film is "too real," and is therefore false for being so deceptively illusory; while for Bazin the Hollywood film is not real enough. But both Dayan and Bazin argue their case in terms of certain basic conventions and technologies and a dualist notion of the possible interplay among them.

The primary purpose of this essay is not to argue a full-blooded alternative description of the mind/screen relationship. I am concerned, rather, to explore one specific set of such relationships, those obtaining between myself and certain films of



Alfred Hitchcock, relationships which may be characterized both thematically (in terms of part-whole dramatic logic) and perceptually (in terms of the analogies which may be said to exist between Hitchcock's thematic points and our mode of attending to those points). In the former case I will deal with the theme of "reading," which I take to be a central Hitchcock concern, and will explore its expression through plot, iconography, and character relationships; and in the latter case I will extend the notion of "reading" to include the activity of the spectator himself. My larger concern, however, is to demonstrate in very specific terms the falsity of the Dayan/Bazin position (hence my theoretical prologue). Never once does Hitchcock step outside the conventional technological bounds of the "classical narrative cinema"—and it is almost purely in terms of such conventions that Dayan and Bazin argue their cases—

and yet to read Hitchcock's implications in their fullness is to confront the ethics of reading, as "modernism" would have us do, in a very direct way. In short, Hitchcock is a paradigm case of the film-maker who bridges the gap which some critics have attempted to enforce between classical and modernist narratives and by so doing Hitchcock calls the false dualism of Dayan and others into serious question.

II. Voyeurism and Rear Window

To date the mind/screen relationship in Hitchcock's films has been described largely in terms of "voyeurism" or "identification." The *locus classicus* here is *Rear Window* and the standard argument focuses on the implicit parallel between the voyeuristic tendencies of the film's central character, played by James Stewart, and the viewer. Both are trapped in their seats, the viewer in his theater seat, Jefferies in his wheelchair. And both use their entrapment, or so this line of reasoning has it, as an opportunity to indulge an irresponsible appetite for morbid, vicarious experience. Thus Jefferies peers out of his rear window to the windows across the courtyard and sees in each one some projection of his own worst fears and fantasies, the worst of which, his fear of marriage and his attendant desire to be rid of Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly), governs his interpretation of the actions of Lars Thorvald (Raymond Burr). It's as if Jefferies had *willed* Thorvald's murder of his wife—and we share Jefferies's guilt by seeing the film largely through his eyes via Hitchcock's use of subjective camera.

All of which is true enough, as far as it goes, and Robin Wood has demonstrated, in his seminal essay on the film, that it does not go far enough. But the point to make in the present context is that this largely negative description of the mind/screen relationship in Hitchcock still has currency. One need only look at Donald Spoto's recent book on Hitchcock to see how temptingly simple and respectable the notion can be.⁵ Spoto never misses a chance to point out the voyeurism theme whenever it (or something like it) crops up in Hitchcock, and he does so without sufficiently accounting for Wood's altogether necessary qualification. As Wood points out, a strict Jefferies-as-voyeur reading of the film fails to explain the fact that Jefferies and his neighborhood are both better for the experience. Ought he not to be worse off if looking out his window were a vice *per se*? Furthermore, and more significantly, isn't the logical outcome of taking the viewer-as-voyeur position seriously some species of blindness? Wouldn't the point of the film be that we should *not* look at or through cinematic windows? Of course, one could argue that Jefferies himself accepts just that sort of myopia. At film's end he is asleep in his wheelchair with his back to the window. But, despite the fact that his eyes are closed, Jefferies's position in space is one which acknowledges (and celebrates) the positive

aspects of his voyeuristic experience. He is facing toward Lisa rather than away from her, thereby implicitly accepting the sort of sexual vulnerability he had earlier rejected. And the obsessive sleeplessness which characterizes his behavior throughout most of the film finally gives way to an almost childlike sense of security. The cause-effect logic is clear: only by accepting sexuality is emotional security possible.

Such a re-reading of the final scene of *Rear Window* fits far better with my recollections of the film than Spoto's critical description. Unfortunately, however, *Rear Window* only exists for most of us as it has been described by such as Spoto and Durnat, and this may well account for the fact that Hitchcock scholarship generally has not advanced much beyond the judiciously qualified voyeur/identification model originally (and most eloquently) outlined by Robin Wood in *Hitchcock's Films*.⁶ A central text was and is missing. So rather than rethink the mind/screen relationship in Hitchcock, critics have by and large (and quite properly) taken other approaches to his films. Having studied and taught Hitchcock for several years, however, has convinced me that we need not let the unavailability of *Rear Window* stand in our way. If anything, the voyeurism thesis fits the film almost too neatly. Perhaps it's just as well that we are forced to reconsider the vision issue in Hitchcock without special reference to *Rear Window*.

III. To Read and Be Read (Narrative Structures)

One reason the voyeur/identification thesis fails to hold up is that it depends too heavily on a naïve equation between technique (subjective camera in this instance) and theme (that of voyeurism). Of course, Hitchcock himself has repeatedly encouraged this sort of naïveté by his refusal to discuss the thematic and mimetic aspects of his films. He would much rather focus on exactly those visual grace-notes which most overtly typify his style. But a critic's task is precisely to look at parts and wholes, to see, for example, the relationships which may exist between the plot-action of a particular film and its various visual and iconographic patterns. And to look at Hitchcock this way is to understand how thoroughly conventional he is in technological terms without thereby leveling the Dayan/Bazin charge of simple-minded, and therefore reactionary, illusionism. Looked at objectively, and purely in terms of shot construction or *découpage* (and, again, it is in exactly such localized stylistic terms that Dayan and Bazin couch their charges), Hitchcock's stylistic repertoire is indistinguishable from that of Hollywood generally. His camera functions largely as an objective recorder of the profilmic spectacle, only occasionally (if tellingly, as I will argue) adopting a subjective point of view. His shot catalog is likewise

conventional, a mix of long shots, medium shots and closeups used in fairly conventional two-shot or three-shot or shot/reverse shot sequences. And even Hitchcock's more overtly expressionistic devices—his superimpositions, his occasional voice-overs, his expressive use of matte-shots, his marvelous montage set pieces—all have conventional precedents in mainstream cinematic history. Thus, if one insists on trying to define the essential Hitchcock only and exclusively in terms of technology and the localized use of it, one is bound to fail, either by over-emphasizing the importance of specific stylistic devices (like subjective camera) or by condemning in a priori terms the whole of his technological repertoire.

We can best avoid the former error by beginning our discussion of the reading/vision metaphor in Hitchcock at its most general level—as it functions to motivate certain recurrent narrative patterns in Hitchcock's films. No doubt the most well known of these patterns involves the "wrong man" motif: one man is accused or suspected of a crime that another man has committed and this "wrong man" is inevitably forced to prove his own innocence. We may with equal accuracy term this the "misread man" figure. This may be taken quite literally in some cases: many of these films involve both newspaper accounts and news photographs of the crime and the "criminal." Thus the opening sequence of *The Lodger* is comprised of the discovery of a murder and a report of that murder, a report which we follow in an almost documentary fashion from the initial reporter's notes to the finished product as it is sold by street corner newsboys. Newspapers play an important part in *The 39 Steps*. Hannay nervously reads newspaper accounts describing him as "The Portland Place Murderer" while on the train to Scotland; and later, in the Crofter's cottage, the news-headlines reveal his true identity to the Crofter's wife. *To Catch a Thief* also includes newspaper speculation on the guilt of John Robie; and in *North by Northwest* we get both newspapers (the one that Thornhill turns face down as he passes through the club car of the Twentieth Century, for example) and news photos, specifically the famous photo of an astonished Thornhill with a knife in his hand standing over the freshly murdered corpse of the real Mr. Townsend.

Newspapers or not, however, the "wrong" or "misread man" motif clearly involves a species of misreading. Clues are ignored or misconstrued, conclusions are falsely jumped to, and in nearly every case the assumption of guilt implies a corollary pleasure in the perverse. In *The 39 Steps*, for example, the ladies underwear salesman get a clear charge from speculating on the Portland Place affair. In *Young and Innocent* the two girls on the seashore quite clearly misconstrue the product of the equation "dead woman" + "running man" to



read "man running away" despite the equally reasonable "reading" that Robert himself suggests: "innocent man running for help." The former is far juicier. In *Strangers on a Train* both Ann and her younger sister assume that Guy did indeed kill his wife. In *I Confess* Ruth reads Father Logan's refusal to discuss the murder of the lawyer as evidence that he still loves her (enough to kill for her?). In *The Wrong Man* itself Manny is repeatedly "mis-read" by "eye" witnesses as police take him around to the various hold-up sites; and the case against him hinges largely on his handwriting and spelling, which the police misread as that of the real criminal. In *North by Northwest* Thornhill is continually "read" as George Kaplan on the basis of the most superficial yet ordinary evidence: dandruff, class photos, etc. And Blaney in *Frenzy* is branded a murderer on the basis of a half-overheard conversation (he is heard arguing with his ex-wife) and planted evidence (Rusk hides the clothes of a murdered girl, Blaney's barmaid girlfriend, in Blaney's valise).

The opposite of the "wrong man" theme is the "right man" figure—in which case the action's focal character is less a victim of misreading than a perpetrator who encourages it. He is guilty. We see this quite clearly as a sub-pattern in *Stage Fright*



where the Richard Todd character "authorizes" the famous misleading flashback in order to hide the truth of his guilt. *Dial M for Murder* also involves elaborate attempts to manipulate facts and evidence, in this instance to be rid of someone rather than to escape a pre-existent guilt. *Torn Curtain*, particularly when read as a critique of the Paul Newman character, can be seen to fit this pattern: Michael Armstrong willingly endangers several lives (including that of his fiancée) in order to further his own career, and he does so by playing the role of defector. There is even a press conference where he publicly announces his "pacifistic" motives for switching sides.

Already we can see the complementary nature of these character/action categories. To describe the first two as opposites is accurate at one level—"misread" men generally attempt through the course of the plot to establish the "legibility" of their innocence while their opposites seek to "erase" evidence of guilt; and it is also true that Hitchcock tends to focus attention in particular movies on one or the other sort of protagonist—but the two are frequently seen together. Thus the "misread" man is often the victim, not only of public hysteria and rumor-mongering, but of demonic playwrights as well. In *Strangers on a Train*

Guy Haines is almost framed for murder by the real murderer, Bruno Anthony. In *I Confess*, Father Logan is framed by Otto Keller, whose *coup de théâtre* involves confessing his crime to the priest himself, thus preventing Logan from making his own innocence public. The Cary Grant character in *To Catch a Thief* is likewise framed, and also by someone who knows the "trademarks" of the victim's profession. We see a similar character alignment in *North by Northwest*: the "misread" man is "wronged" by intelligence agents who refuse to clear up the mystery of George Kaplan. Perhaps the best example of a character "wronged" by the theatricality of others is Scottie Ferguson (James Stewart) in *Vertigo*: Elster and Judy plot murder and set Scottie up to take responsibility for "Madeleine's" death.

It is also worth remarking how alike both the "misread" and the "misleading" can often be in their actions: both spend most of their time concealing their true identity. For the misread man, however, concealment is only a temporary survival tactic which allows him time to "re-read" the world, to break its codes and uncover those signs or symbols which will verify his innocence. It is also the case that the concealment of identity (often behind glasses or sunglasses—again the sight metaphor) makes the protagonist mortally and sexually vulnerable, requiring of him exceptional courage and an exceptional willingness to trust in others. To seek the truth of identity in Hitchcock is thus generally to undergo a process of growth and maturation. Misleaders, on the other hand, tend to be arrested in their development, and their attempts to "re-write" the world are often predicated on the denial of vulnerability. Thus Bruno Anthony wants to be rid of his authoritarian father in *Strangers on a Train* while Tony Wendice in *Dial M for Murder* seeks to be rid of his cool, detached, and disregarding wife. Likewise, Norman Bates in *Psycho* "re-writes" the relationship between his mother and her lover—and his motive is clearly security.

A third narrative pattern in Hitchcock focuses not on the misread or the misleading but on the "reader"—of which there are basically two sorts. The first is the Hitchcock "misreader," a character who chooses for basically selfish though often unconscious or psychotic reasons to disregard evidence or to misconstrue the actions or feelings of others. Mrs. Verloc in *Sabotage* is an early example of this.⁷ She marries her husband for financial reasons, to provide for herself and her brother, and she completely disregards or underestimates the depth of her husband's affections. Mr. Verloc is thus put in a position where money is the language of love and he finds it necessary to commit sabotage in order to get the necessary funds. Mrs. Verloc's apparently unselfish concern for her brother thus results, ironically, in his very death when the bomb he carries for Mr. Verloc

explodes. A somewhat less malign version of the woman who misreads is Lina in *Suspicion*. Lina, as Donald Spoto points out, is the paradigm of the Hitchcock "reader": we first see her with a book in her lap, and her reading glasses become a dominant image through the course of the film. Equally interesting is the self-reflective quality of the film's studio settings. Lina's *Wuthering Heights* fantasies of murder on the heath are marvellously embodied by Hitchcock's story-book gothic backdrops; and it's the danger implicit in those fantasies that the movie makes concrete and then rejects. That is, Lina's fear of murder almost results in her death when she struggles with Johnny as they drive along the sea-cliff: thus "misreading" her husband's actions is almost fatal to them both, however satisfying it might be in terms of Lina's persecution complex. It is therefore completely appropriate that the film's last shot should be location footage of the Aysgarth car turning around and driving away as Lina leaves cowering against the door and slides closer to her husband. Reality thus replaces fantasy (as location footage replaces studio footage) and this replacement serves to bring Johnny and Lina more genuinely together than they had ever been before.



Notorious and *The Paradine Case* give us examples of men who "misread."⁸ In the former the Cary Grant character both withholds affection from Ingrid Bergman and refuses to accept his own vulnerability. Thus he repeatedly refuses to look Alicia in the eye (if he looks at her at all it is accusingly, or with his head turned sarcastically to the side, away from her), which results in his more general and nearly fatal "misreading" of her actions and motives. His "blindness" almost kills her—and does result in the death (or so we assume) of Alex Sebastian. *The Paradine Case* presents an interestingly complex variation on this theme, looking forward, as Robin Wood points out, to *Vertigo*. Anthony Keane (Gregory Peck) allows his attraction to his client to pervert his reading of the facts. Thus he ignores the guilt of Anna Paradine, who did indeed murder her blind husband, and accuses her lover (Louis Jourdan) so mercilessly that the man eventually commits suicide. Once again, "blindness" to the facts has death as its product.

A second sort of Hitchcock "reader"

serves to anchor a more positive chain of narrative actions and events. Three examples in particular stand out. The Joan Fontaine character in *Rebecca*, unlike her counterpart in *Suspicion*, cannot be described as psychotic, however much Mrs. Danvers would like her to believe she is. The second Mrs. DeWinter is, rather, a genuine Hitchcock innocent—whatever guilt she eventually incurs hinges only on her wish that the dead Rebecca were really and finally dead. Her primary activity in the film, the rightness of which is eventually rewarded, involves the attempt to read her husband and her circumstances. Thus she stages the Manderley party on the mistaken assumption that Max's malaise results from longing rather than guilt, and it backfires on her. The point, however, is that she does her often naïve best to see the truth, and that truth eventually frees her from the spectre of Rebecca.

The action of *Spellbound* follows a similar pattern.⁹ Gregory Peck, as it turns out, is a "wrong man," falsely accused of murder. But he is unable to "read" his own dilemma due to a correlation between his present circumstances and a deeply repressed childhood trauma. The film's ethical center is therefore shifted to the psychiatrist played by Ingrid Bergman. She is intuitively certain of Ballantine's innocence and she does her analytical best to "read" the pattern of Ballantine's emotional disturbances. It is worth remarking here that her ability to help Ballantine is somewhat at odds with the detachment associated with her profession: hence the fact, as Spoto points out, that "seeing" John correctly requires her to take off the glasses which she wears at the film's beginning.



Far and away the best example of this "right-reader" motif involves the Mark Rutland character in *Marnie*. Like Max in *Rebecca* and Ballantine in *Spellbound*, Marnie Edgar is plagued by a traumatic past—and Mark Rutland, like his predecessors, opens himself up to the vulnerability and responsibility implicit in learning to read the emotional pattern of another person's life. Thus Rutland exercises his abilities as a reader (he runs a publishing company and is frequently framed against bookcases) and slowly assembles the clues—Marnie's fear of storms, her reactions to the color red, her kleptomania, her fear of men, her fear of

tapping noises—which eventually become the "combination" which allows him to unlock Marnie's past and set her free. It is a dangerous course to follow. In the case of Constance Peterson in *Spellbound* the effort to read John Ballantine almost results in life-long separation when John is convicted, on evidence developed by Constance, of murder. And in Mark Rutland's case there is the possibility of a prison term for aiding and abetting. Furthermore, there is always the chance that intuitive sympathy will backfire, as it does for young Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt*, as it does for Anthony Keane in *The Paradine Case*. But it is generally true in Hitchcock that assumptions of innocence are eventually rewarded. Even Eve Gill in *Stage Fright* gains for her experience. At film's end she finally appreciates the virtues of being ordinary—as they are personified by Inspector "Smith."

One further narrative pattern is worth considering here which may be understood as extending the implications of the "wrong reader/right reader" pair. The films of this group might be termed the "family" films, in that all are more explicitly than elsewhere in Hitchcock concerned with multiple focal characters.¹⁰ Furthermore, all conceive of the process of "reading" in terms not of individual subjects but, more generally, in terms of the world as a whole. Thus we find a connection between family groups of one sort or another, actual families in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Wrong Man*, *The Birds*, and *Topaz*, an ad hoc "family of man" in *The Lady Vanishes*, and social order or international politics: usually some disharmony in the microcosm of the family, some "misreading" of proper familial or sexual relationships, results in, calls forth, or is paralleled by, a similar or parody disharmony in the macrocosm of society. Thus in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), to take one example, the Lawrence family is characterized by an almost-fatal lack of sexual decorum. The father jokes about his daughter, Betty, "knocking [men] cold" before her time while Mrs. Lawrence half jokingly draws the conclusion, after losing a skeet shooting contest with some help from her distracting young daughter, that sportsmen ought not to have children. Indeed, only a few moments later, Jill Lawrence suggests that her husband take their daughter to bed while she goes off with another man. In terms of the film's ostensible intrigue, to be sure, things do not really get under way until Jill Lawrence's parody paramour is shot, at which point he whispers instructions to her regarding a state secret. In the confusion the daughter is sent to bed alone, only to be kidnapped by the terrorists who are responsible for the murder: the Lawrences "know too much" and their daughter will be the forfeit if they talk. The associative logic, however, is clear. The Lawrences, like many Hitchcock parents, do not value their daughter or her sexuality sufficiently and it takes her kidnapping to bring them to their senses.

But there is more to it than that. The British Foreign Office knows that the terrorists are planning the assassination of a foreign diplomat, but they do not know when. The Lawrences are therefore faced with an agonizing dilemma which forces them to "reread" the world in two respects. To begin with, they fear going to the police, so Bob Lawrence and his brother-in-law set out on their own to break the code of the message Bob found in the paramour's hotel room—in the hope that they will thus find Betty. Secondly, however, it becomes intuitively imperative, for Jill at least, to rethink her sense of social responsibility. If the terrorists are not stopped, a new world war might result. Thus when she goes, at Bob's instruction, to Albert Hall, and despite the warning she is given in the form of Betty's broach not to interfere, Jill intuitively and spontaneously foils the assassination attempt by shouting at the last minute, thus spoiling the sharpshooter's aim.



None of which is quite so neat in cause-and-effect dramatic terms as the "rereading" undertaken by Mark Rutland in *Marnie*—but it is a pattern seen frequently in Hitchcock, in both versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*; in *The Lady Vanishes*, where the secret to be uncovered is the whereabouts of the vanished lady; in *Notorious*, where the secret, the uranium bottle in Sebastian's cellar, is simultaneously sexual and political; in *The Birds*, where the secret involves the logic of the bird attacks themselves; and in *Topaz*, where two secrets are involved: the extent of Russian military involvement in Cuba and the identity of the French double-agent. In both cases political brinksmanship or double-dealing is paralleled, and commented on, by illicit, extra-marital sexual relations, Devereaux with Juanita de Cordoba and Madame Devereaux with Jacques Granville (newspapers, it should be pointed out, play a particularly important thematic part in all of this). Thus in all of these films we see the microcosm/macrocosm metaphor and in every case the mystery to be "decoded" involves the survival of civilization.

IV. The Problematics of Vision

Thus far I have suggested that a central metaphor, writ large in the basic narrative patterns of the Hitchcock cinema, concerns the act of "reading." We can confirm the



centrality of this metaphor by attending to certain recurrent visual features in Hitchcock, features which by themselves would not necessarily serve to embody the vision issue, but which do when set within the context of the reading metaphor which may be said to motivate the majority of his films.

The visual feature in Hitchcock most immediately relevant to the reading theme involves subjective shots wherein the world goes out of focus or is distorted in some way. The subjectivity in question here is often that of an important or dramatically central "misreader" and these "misreadings" are generally of two sorts. The first involves literal visual or focal distortion. Several instances come immediately to mind. During the Albert Hall sequence in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), for example, Jill's vision goes momentarily blurry, the blur correlating exactly with her confused loyalties; and her vision snaps back into focus when the assassin's gun barrel enters the frame in close up. The logic of Jill's visual and moral recovery is clear: to attend closely to the immediacy of the situation is to resolve her doubts. A man will die if she remains silent—and to her credit she shouts the warning. We see a similar sort of visual distortion early in *Notorious*. It's the morning after the night

before and Ingrid Bergman awakes to the sight of Cary Grant standing in her bedroom door. The sequence involves several cuts from objective (of Bergman watching Grant) to subjective (Grant as seen by Bergman)—but the subjective shots taken together amount to a single take, the camera panning and twisting to follow Grant as he walks from the bedroom door to Alicia's bedside. The shot is darkly lit, at first, Grant's face indistinct in the shadows (both qualities corresponding to Alicia's blurred sense of guilt, her disgust at her



father's Nazi sympathies running counter to her sense of daughterly loyalty); furthermore, its sustained subjectivity correlates with the film's general theme of entrapment: because Alicia (the camera) maintains a fixed position, her view of Grant is constantly askew and out of whack, as she (the camera) struggles to keep Grant in frame—at shot's end he is literally upside down.

This correlation between physical entrapment and distorted sense perceptions is also central to *Psycho*. In both *Notorious*



and *Psycho* closeups correspond to the fact of entrapment by cutting characters off from each other and from the world around them. This entrapment motif is refined and extended in *Psycho*, however, by Hitchcock's systematic use of tight enclosures, small rooms and automobiles particularly (the trunk of Marion's car thus becomes her coffin). A corollary visual distortion is evidenced early in *Psycho*, as Marion drives away from Phoenix, and it results, like the distortion in *Notorious*, from spatial rigidity. Marion is driving along the highway, trapped both behind the wheel and by the road itself, and Hitchcock cuts between objective shots of Marion (shots which seem subjective because they are accompanied by subjective voice-overs) and truly subjective shots of the windshield and the road taken from Marion's point of view. Vision thus becomes problematic. Sight is distorted by a constant, seemingly

hostile onrush of headlights from the darkness, and is distorted even more by the sheen of windshield water and the constant swing of the wiper blades. This lack of visual acuity corresponds to her lack of moral acuity, a lack further evidenced by the paranoid "fine soft flesh" character of the voice-overs, which represent Marion's sense of the response her theft will elicit from her boss and her victim.

A second sort of subjective visual figure in Hitchcock, again corresponding in some sense with failures to "read" the world properly, involves hallucination sequences. The earliest of these, in my experience, is found in *The Lodger*. The film's detective, Joe, seeks to "put the cuffs" on both The Avenger and on Daisy, Joe's girl friend. Both concerns come together when Joe finds The Lodger and Daisy out together on a Tuesday night (The Avenger always strikes on Tuesdays). Joe tells Drew to keep his hands off Daisy; Daisy tells Joe to quit interfering; and Joe is left seated beneath a lamp post, his head in his hands. Joe looks out from under the brim of his hat at the departing couple, and then down at the ground, where he sees the imprint of a man's shoe. We see the imprint subjectively, from Joe's point of view—and we see, superimposed within the "screen" provided by the shoe print, images "projected" by Joe's imagination: the portraits of blonde women that Drew had ordered removed from his lodgings. Drew's black bag, Drew and Daisy embracing, the ceiling lamps in the room below The Lodger's—all of which serve, in Joe's imagination, to indict The Lodger for murder, but which serve equally, in retrospect, to indict Joe for false accusation. Joe quite literally "misreads" the footprint.

Suspicion, as I have already remarked, is a paradigm case of the "misreader" plot in Hitchcock. And it also provides a most striking example of the hallucination figure. Lina, Johnny, and Beaky are playing a word game, and Lina forms the words "murder" and "murderer" in succession. She quite literally in this instance "rewrites" the world to suit her own conceptions—and the degree of her fearfulness is evidenced by the sequence of shots which follow. We see a closeup of Johnny's profile from her point of view (profiles are frequently correlated in Hitchcock with "one-sided" readings or personalities—see *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Notorious*, and *The Wrong Man*); another closeup of Lina; a closeup of the word "murderer," after which the camera tilts up and then zooms to a closeup of a seascape





photograph in a magazine which is held by Johnny; closeup of Lina again, over which is superimposed a long shot of Johnny pushing Beaky off the cliff; closeup of Lina; then another closeup of Lina with the image of Beaky, falling to his death, superimposed. Strictly speaking, of course, the



"hallucinations" here are not subjective. What we have, rather, are two non-subjective perspectives—objective shots of Lina combined with objective shots of Johnny pushing Beaky off the cliff or of Beaky falling. The cutting, however, authorizes the subjective "reading" of the scene. The closeup of Lina isolates her from the game; her glance at the magazine raises the reading issue, specifically in terms of her reading of and about Johnny (he holds the magazine—she has read about him in magazines before); and the objective shots of "the murder" are obviously contradicted by the context of the scene: Johnny and Beaky are indoors playing anagrams, not outdoors at the sea coast. Hence there is no other way to read the "murder" sequence than as an expression of Lina's subjectivity—which is precisely how most audiences intuitively read the scene.

The red suffusions and the dream sequences in *Marnie* represent Hitchcock's most elaborate use of the hallucination figure, combining the "subjective" hallucinations characteristic of films like *The Lodger* and *Sabotage* with the "objective" hallucinations of *Suspicion*. Most of the suffusion sequences in *Marnie* follow a similar logic: cut from a medium shot or closeup of Marnie to a point-of-view closeup of some appropriate red stimulus (flowers, ink-stained sleeve, a jockey's silks, red hunting jackets) to a closeup of Marnie over which the "suffusion" itself is superimposed. The superimposition figure is similar to that used in *Suspicion*, but here it points backwards, to Marnie's past, rather than forward, to a future that Lina fears. In both cases, however, the combination of "objective" shots of the character and "subjective" superimpositions mirrors the degree to which both women "misread" the world (in neither case is the character's subjective response authorized by the truth of the present) and also the degree to which their misreadings are, in some meaningful way, imposed upon them from outside—in both cases present neurosis is ultimately traceable to parental disregard.

Such is the general rule for the suffusions in *Marnie*—but Hitchcock also works some significantly expressive variations upon the pattern. The first variation involves the first "dream" sequence, which takes place in Mrs. Edgar's Baltimore row house. Here we do not cut from a point-of-view shot to a closeup of Marnie because there is no visual stimulus to trigger the suffusion. Rather we have a single shot which begins with a closeup of Marnie's window, where we see and, more importantly, hear the knock of the windowshade pull ring as it taps against the glass; then we pan right to Marnie, still asleep, at which point the suffusion is superimposed. The second variation involves the scene in Mark's office when Marnie is frightened by the thunderstorm. The cutting of the sequence is fairly complex, involving objective shots of Marnie, subjective point-of-view shots from

Marnie's perspective, as well as reaction shots of Mark as he tries to "read" her actions. The point to make again, however, is that the stimulus which triggers Marnie's reaction is as much aural (the thunder) as visual (the lightning); furthermore, in this case the suffusion is not superimposed over Marnie herself. Rather, we see a long full shot of the floor-to-ceiling window behind Mark's desk, taken from Marnie's point of view, through which we see the lightning flashing—and it's the flashing light which takes on the reddish tint (at which point Marnie begs Mark to "stop the colors"). The third exception "rhymes" with the first (both are "dream" sequences) but with an added complication. We see a closeup of the adult Marnie in bed, but with rough bedclothes and a sailor's pillow ("Aloha"),



over which is superimposed the red suffusion—then, as a mysterious hand knocks on a window behind Marnie's bed, we pull back and pan right—with no break in continuity whatsoever—to a full shot of Marnie's room in the Rutland mansion, and specifically of the door between her room and Mark's, through which he then enters.

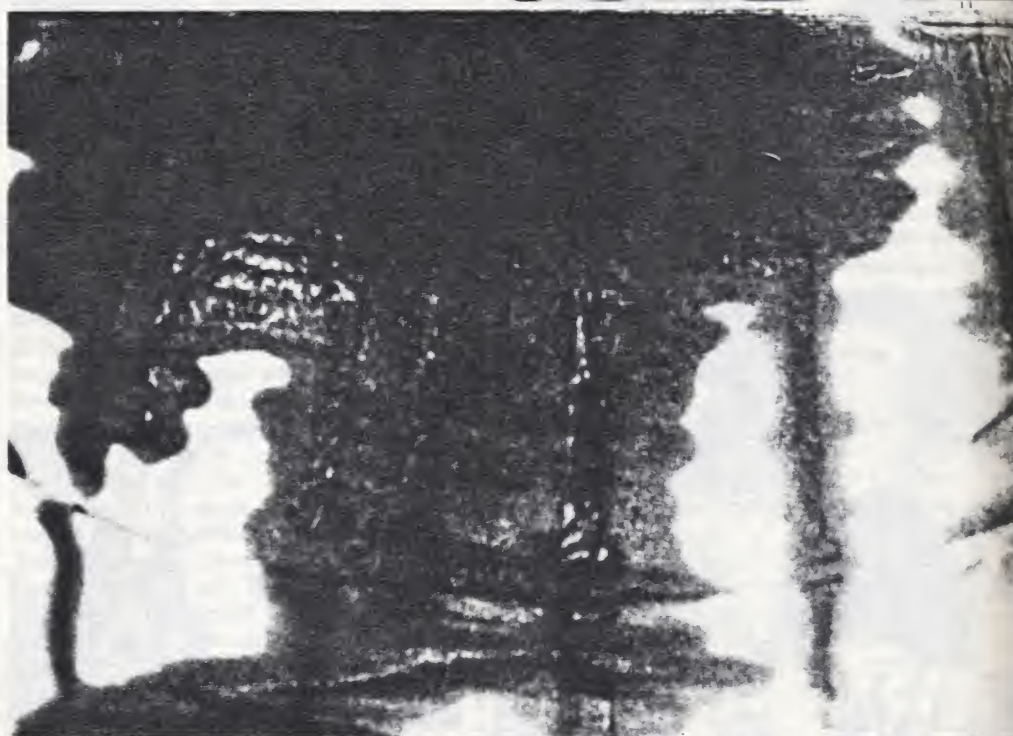


The final exceptional suffusion scene, Marnie's reliving of her mother's "accident," is also the initial suffusion scene. Here we return to the general pattern of the other suffusion scenes, but again there are some significant, this time temporal, variations. That is, the first shot is in the past (Marnie as a young girl), the point-of-view shot (of the dead sailor's bloody shirt) is also in the past and is further complicated by using the zoom motif (thus enforcing a parallel between this scene, having to do with sex, and the final "robbery" scene which had to do with money); furthermore, the suffusion is superimposed over the point-of-view shot



rather than Marnie herself; and the final shot is of Marnie, but of Marnie in the present.

We can see a clear progression to these "exceptional" suffusion sequences. Each of them "externalizes" Marnie's subjectivity, either for us or for Mark, though for us first, allowing us not only to read her but to read Mark reading her. Thus we are given the aural clues to Marnie's situation (knocking, thunder); but we get as well the only truly "subjective" suffusions—suffusions seen literally through Marnie's eyes—the "reddish" lightning and the suffusion over the sailor's shirt. The implication, I think, is clear: to be truly "objective" in our reading of other people requires an imaginative involvement in their subjectivity. Thus we become both the misreader (as we see the storm through Marnie's eyes) and the right-reader (as we see Marnie through Mark's); and we are both almost simultaneously. The curative potential of this sort of imaginative involvement with others is also evidenced by the mirror-image construction of the two dream sequences. The first starts with the stimulus and then "includes" Marnie by panning right, as if the camera were "imposing" the illness upon her. The second, however, begins with Marnie in a limbo state, half in childhood (the bed), half in adulthood (it is Tippi Hedren), half in dream (the "childhood" set), half in her present reality (the Rutland house)—and the explicit character of this confusion can be read positively, as if Marnie were getting ready to break out of her psychosis. Thus the camera pans *away* from Marnie, as if to *remove* her illness, and the agent of that removal, the reader who cracks the code, enters at the end of the shot. All of which finds its logical visual and thematic pay-off in the final suffusion scene, wherein the symbol of the suffusion is reunited with its proper emotional referent. Thus the past/present split in Marnie's personality is openly acknowledged, by cutting back and forth



between two actresses of different ages playing the same character, and the suffusion is linked quite explicitly to the gaze of the child Marnie as she looks directly at the blood on the sailor's shirt—which is where the suffusion then stays. That is, by going back to the past Marnie "places" the suffusions in their proper emotional context, at which point she can finally leave them behind.

Most of the hallucinations or distortions thus far considered have been, at least in their immediate genesis, internally motivated. Marnie's "suffusions" thus "belong" to her, even if, in mimetic fact, her general psychosis can ultimately be traced back to her mother's actions and values, both before and after the "accident." A related species of Hitchcock hallucination requires brief comment here—that of "induced hallucinations." We see an early example of this in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) when Betty's Uncle Clive is put under hypnosis by Abbot's Nurse in her role as a bogus priestess of the Tabernacle of the Sun. The sequence is shot largely in alternating closeups as The Nurse invokes the "first degree of the seven-fold way" and holds a glass talisman between herself and Uncle Clive. Clive slowly goes under, and his increasing subservience to the trance is emblemized by a prism-like subjective point-of-view shot of the priestess as Clive sees her through the glass: the world literally "fragments" around her, and the result of this fragmentation is the surrender of Clive's consciousness.

A central sequence in *The Wrong Man*, wherein Manny Balestero (Henry Fonda) is booked and locked up, evidences a similar surrender of consciousness. The *mise-en-scène* as Manny is shut up in his cell is restricted to medium and close shots, alternating between objective and subjective points of view. Hitchcock employs moving camera, furthermore, both to follow Manny as he paces, and to replicate the nervous pattern of his gaze as Manny views his confinement. Hitchcock cuts away briefly to a scene involving Manny's family as they are informed of Manny's arrest (cutting away has the effect of eliding time, thus to stretch out the duration of Manny's agony) and then Hitchcock returns us to the cell, where Manny's pacing accelerates. Manny then stops moving, his back now to the wall, his eyes closed—and the camera starts to trace an accelerating clockwise circle such that Manny's face seems to bounce around the edges of the frame until the shot fades to black. Properly speaking, of course, the shot is not a point-of-view shot; and yet the encircling camera does seem to reflect Manny's internal state, his subjective sense that the world has gone off its axis. It is as if Manny had imparted his own anxious energy to the wall and the cell in such a way as to set them in motion, thus impugning the moral and visual stability of a world which has, quite literally and brutally, "framed" him.

A similar threat to consciousness, embodied by a similar fragmentation or distortion of vision, can be seen as late as *North by Northwest*. In an early sequence the Cary Grant character, Roger Thornhill, is forced to drink an overdose of bourbon prior to being put in a car and pushed (or such is the plan) over a cliff. Thornhill is an experienced drinker, however, and he manages to take control of the car and flee for his life. The subjective shots in question thus represent his view of the road as that view is distorted by alcohol, the distortion in this case being a multiplication of images: Thornhill sees two roads, two sets of yellow lines diverging into opposite corners of the frame, and his problem is thus, quite literally, to read his own hallucination. The point to make in all three cases, however, is that the hallucination or distortion is imposed immediately and fairly directly from the outside. It is not a matter, as it was in *Suspicion* and *Marnie*, of a character's psychic past distorting their view of the present. Rather, some external influence, an influence generally personified by spies or international terrorists, is aggressively involved in "re-writing" the world or a character's view of it, often by means of or for



the purpose of murder. Thus The Nurse is part of a conspiracy to murder a European diplomat; thus Alicia in *Notorious* (to cite another example) is poisoned by her husband and mother-in-law for being an American intelligence agent; and thus Thornhill's life is threatened in *North by Northwest* on the assumption that he is George Kaplan, another American agent.

Another important image in Hitchcock of vision run amok is less a matter of subjective vision than dramatic context. To this point we have been concerned exclusively with visually "attributable" confusions of sight: vision is obscured because some particular character "misreads" the world, either voluntarily or under some form of duress (psychic or chemical). Such images are generally and more frequently to

be found in films which focus on "misreaders." In films (or filmic sub-texts) which focus on "misleaders" or the "misread," however, the iconographic consequence is more frequently for some physical object to assume an importance, both moral and graphic, far out of proportion to that which it would have in everyday existence.

Three remarkable examples come immediately to mind. The first of these is found in *The Lady Vanishes* when Dr. Hartz tries to eliminate the threat to his scheme to make the old lady vanish by "doctoring" the brandy. While waiting for Iris and Gilbert to down their drinks, Dr. Hartz chats with them across a dining car table—and Hitchcock shoots the scene so as to emphasize the brandy glasses in the foreground. Indeed, he used oversized glasses to achieve the effect. Of course, rhetorically speaking, this amounts to a fairly direct sort of dramatic underscoring. But in graphic terms the oversize glasses bespeak a world on the verge of obliteration (they rest on the bottom of the frame and threaten to fill it altogether). Furthermore, their position is such that they distort our sight of the characters (or parts of characters) for coming between the camera and its subjects. A similar and equally famous example of graphic distortion or foreshortening is found in *Notorious*. Once Sebastian and his mother learn of Alicia's identity as an American agent, they begin to poison her with daily doses in her coffee. There are three such episodes, of Alicia drinking the doctored coffee, the last of which culminates in an extended example of the "induced hallucination" figure as Alicia realizes what is happening and tries to escape, only to black out (quite literally at certain moments). This is preceded, however, by several shots which serve emblematically to represent Alicia's situation. We thus see her sitting in a wing-backed chair, chatting about the poor state of her health with Alex, his mother, and Dr. Anderson, one of Sebastian's Nazi cohorts. The cutting breaks down on conversation, but the sequence is tied together by the coffee cup motif (we see Alex's mother pour it and hand it to Alicia; we watch Alicia drink). The logical outcome of the scene's action is that the drugged coffee will eventually "overwhelm" Alicia. And in graphic terms this is exactly what happens. Thus the camera repeatedly returns to up-angle medium two-shots of Alicia (screen left) and Dr. Anderson (screen right); but the foreground, and therefore the shot itself, is dominated by Alicia's coffee cup. In two dimensions, indeed, it is larger than Alicia herself and threatens to push her out of the frame (and out of existence) altogether. In any reasonably ordered world coffee cups would not assume such proportions. But until the Nazis can be controlled, there is little chance that the world will be reasonably ordered.

A less obvious but equally interesting



use of this motif can be found in *Strangers on a Train*. In *The Lady Vanishes* and *Notorious* the "disproportion" figure comes well into the intrigue of the film and involves an overt disjunction of dimensions: people are overtly and graphically overshadowed by ordinarily small-scale physical objects. The central "object" in *Strangers on a Train* is Guy's cigarette lighter and, at times, towards the film's conclusion, it does indeed grow in size and significance beyond ordinary measure. Thus, during the famous cross-cutting sequence, Guy playing tennis while Bruno reaches into the storm drain to retrieve Guy's lighter (which he intends to "plant" as evidence of Guy's guilt), the lighter comes almost to fill the screen. Indeed, we cut directly from Guy to the lighter as Bruno finally takes hold of it, almost as if the lighter were going to push Guy out of the frame for good. The juxtaposition here is temporal rather than spatial *per se*, but it has much the same effect.

That this use of the lighter is of the same order as Hitchcock's use of the glasses in *The Lady Vanishes* and the cup in *Notorious* is confirmed, however, by the role the lighter plays earlier in the film. We see it initially during the first conversation scene between Guy and Bruno, in the dining car of the train, where Hitchcock underlines its significance by a closeup of it

and by references to it in the dialogue. We next see it in the following scene, when Guy and Bruno have lunch together in Bruno's compartment. Already we associate the lighter with Guy's vulnerability: he is married, the lighter is a present from another woman—an association further underlined by an implicit visual parallel with another piece of personalized jewelry, Bruno's name-plate tie pin, a gift from his mother (which we also see in closeup during the first conversation scene). The scene in Bruno's compartment thus recalls the earlier conversation scenes in *The Lady Vanishes* and *Notorious*. In every case the superficial orderliness of the dialogue is undercut and qualified by the presence of an object on a table in the foreground, an object emblematic of one character's vulnerability and another character's desire to rewrite the world through the exercise of power. Of course, the literal size of the object, relative to character size, is nowhere near so distorted as in the corresponding scenes in the earlier films—but the placement, significance, and thematic effects in all three examples are clearly of a piece. The lighter draws our attention far more than it should; and that by itself amounts to a form of visual distortion.

These three examples hardly begin to catalogue Hitchcock's use of the "distortion" figure. Indeed, as the previous examples suggest, there is a range of such figures in Hitchcock, a range the parameters of which are defined both spatially and dramatically. At one extreme we find "gross" distortions of spatial relationships wherein "small" objects literally overshadow "larger" objects. One thinks of the



little finger of Professor Jordon in *The 39 Steps*, the razor blade and the pistol, respectively, in crucial scenes of *Spellbound*, the stuffed birds in *Psycho*, the bird



cages in the opening scene of *The Birds*, the pistol in *Marnie*, etc. A special case of this involves diagetically acknowledged distortions such as we see with the gigantic den-

tures in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), with the giant heads in *Blackmail* and *North by Northwest* and with the Statue of Liberty in *Saboteur*. At the other extreme we have small-scale objects, like the lighter in *Strangers on a Train*, which assume an overload (an excess?) of dramatic significance and therefore demand (as it were) foregrounding, either literally, as evidenced in *The Lady Vanishes*, *Notorious*, or *Strangers on a Train*, or by repeated use of leitmotif closeups. Such ob-



jects include kitchen knives (*The 39 Steps*, *Saboteur*), personal jewelry (Betty's brooch in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the incriminating ring in *Shadow of a Doubt*,



Rusk's stick pin in *Frenzy*), lamps (*The Wrong Man*, *Vertigo*, *Marnie*), photographs (*The Lodger*, *Shadow of a Doubt*), tea cups (*The Birds*), money



(*Psycho*, *Marnie*), purses (*Suspicion*, *Marnie*), keys (*Notorious*, *The Wrong Man*, *Marnie*), wine bottles (*Notorious*), beverage glasses (*Suspicion*, *Notorious*, *Topaz*), etc.

In summary of the last two sections,

then, we can say that a clear associative relationship exists in Hitchcock between certain recurrent narrative-dramatic structures, wherein characters find their normal sense of themselves and their world (their habitual manner of interpreting self/other relationships) called into question by events, and specific and recurrent graphic patterns, wherein normal proportions or expectations of clarity go awry or unrewarded: each seems in some sense a function of the other. It remains to the following section, however, to specify the exact nature of that relationship: what is the causal logic underlying this association of action and imagery?

V. Isolation and its Iconography

I have suggested, in connection with *Psycho* and *Notorious*, that a correlation exists in Hitchcock between fixity or enclosure (spatial, emotional, both) and a lack of visual/moral acuity. We can extend this generalization in two directions: In terms of "deep structure" dramatic logic we can say with some confidence that moral and visual disorder in Hitchcock generally follows from some denial of life's wholeness, a retreat from its responsibilities and attachments. The two primary contexts for conflict in the world of Alfred Hitchcock—the family and international politics—both raise the issue.

The primary sexual/familial sin is desertion, either in fact (various sorts of familial or sexual desertion are evidenced, for example, in *Young and Innocent*, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, *Stage Fright*, *I Confess*, *Topaz*, and *Family Plot*, to name only a few) or in emotional fantasy (as in *Rebecca*, *Psycho*, *The Birds*, and *Marnie*); and both sorts of desertion tend to set in motion a similar sequence of emotional events. That is, desertion or the fear of it tends to drive characters, literally in some cases, into emotional corners where they cannot respond openly to the world. They either retreat into psychoses or obsessions of one sort or another (c.f. *The Lodger*, *Rebecca*, *Suspicion*, *Spellbound*, *I Confess*, *The Wrong Man*, *Marnie*) or they lash out in anger, anger which usually takes the form of murder (*Shadow of a Doubt*, *Rope*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Psycho*, *Family Plot*). *Vertigo*, indeed, shows us how closely aligned obsession and murder can be: Scottie's obsession with Madeleine/Judy leads ultimately to her death.

Likewise, the primary political sin in Hitchcock almost always involves attempts by one country or group to gain some sort of advantage over another. Thus the saboteurs in *The 39 Steps*, *Sabotage*, and *The Lady Vanishes* all have England as their target, although in every case, including *The Man Who Knew Too Much* as well, the ultimate aim seems to be to spark international conflict through which the saboteurs or their party hope to profit. Similarly, in Hitchcock's Hollywood films, America

becomes the target, as in *Notorious*, *North by Northwest*, and *Topaz*. But in these cases too there is an international component at work. The Nazis in *Notorious* threaten world peace generally; while in *Topaz* the plot intrigue involves a leak in NATO security. The point to make, however, is how seldom Hitchcock makes a positive case for national patriotism. The patriotic component is usually present for being implicit in the spy-thriller genre; but Hitchcock generally works to subvert it, particularly in *Torn Curtain*. Hence the fact that we seldom know who the saboteurs represent—it doesn't much matter to Hitchcock. The positive case in these films is seldom argued in political terms at all. The positive case is argued, rather, in sexual terms. The political plots in Hitchcock move to deny the bonds of humanity which tie people together by strengthening the hand of one party or country over another. The sexual plots, however, are exactly concerned to re-assert the bonds of love which connect people, despite the political climate which would deny such interconnectedness. Hence the correlation in what I have termed Hitchcock's "family films" between sexual or familial disorder and international disorder: the former is a primary and microcosmic version of the latter. Only in *Topaz*, which I find one of Hitchcock's most pessimistic films, do sexual relationships fail to embody a thematically powerful antidote to political cynicism.

To deny the wholeness of life is thus the cardinal Hitchcock sin: retreating from one's family responsibilities or from one's responsibilities to the larger family of man are its two primary forms, although variants clearly exist. Social class, for example, can be seen as a form of "nationalism" which denies the wholeness of mankind. Thus *The Lodger*, as a matter of subconscious class prerogative, takes his mother's injunction to bring *The Avenger* to justice (an injunction which in itself carries implications of class) as a license to kill: hence the gun he carries in his bag. "Religion" is also a form of nationalism in Hitchcock, for denying the connectedness of mankind: hence his generally satiric treatment of it in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The 39 Steps*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, and *Family Plot*. Even *I Confess* and *The Wrong Man*, purportedly Hitchcock's two most positively "religious" films, lack any sort of religious warmth. Montgomery Clift is no Bing Crosby. Rather, religion in both films serves as an emotional retreat. Thus Father Logan retreats retroactively from his experiences in the war by entering the priesthood; and thus Manny Balestrero retreats from his own uncertainty by "conjuring up" his own "wrong man," someone who can take his place in the cycle of accusations that the film embodies.

Such are the primary "psychological" retreats in Hitchcock: obsession with the past, anger at the present, nationalism, sex-



ism, social class, and religion. In terms of dramatic logic characters become isolated in one or more of these retreats and accordingly lose their ability to read the world in its wholeness and immediacy. The causal chain in *Marnie* demonstrates how complex this can be. Bernice Edgar was impoverished as a child (class), turned to prostitution as a consequence (sexism), became so obsessed with the past that she denied its existence, and turned to religion to justify her denial. *Marnie*, in her turn, thus becomes subconsciously obsessed with the past, and this obsession finds conscious expression in a form of class warfare (*Marnie's* thievery) which has sex as its primary weapon.

We have been concerned in the last several pages with a thematic correlation

between "psychological enclosure" or "psychological fixity" and the lack of moral and visual acuity. We can refine this observation by attending to iconography, here the iconography of causes where earlier we had been concerned with the iconography of visual effects. Many of these, of course, we have already touched upon in other contexts. Bruno's tie clip in *Strangers on a Train*, for example, is emblematic of the Oedipal matrix which cuts him off from ordinary experience. As such the clip is an icon of causality. But Hitchcock's visual treatment, the closeup in the first conversation scene which connects it by means of visual "rhyme" to Guy's cigarette lighter, transforms it into an icon of effect as well. Such visual/thematic economy is one characteristic of the Hitchcock style, a characteristic which reminds us that our critical categories must remain flexible. Nevertheless, and with this qualification in mind, it is possible to locate several symbol systems which bear particularly on the themes of retreat and denial as those themes relate to the larger issue of reading and misreading.

The first of these involves clothing, including jewelry as a sub-set, which serves by and large as a class-marker, indicating how people of wealth and status generally (and mistakenly) wish to be seen. Thus the protagonist in *The Lodger* is defined in class terms by his elegant wardrobe (e.g., his smoking jacket); while the general movement of the film, with its theatrical and fashion model sub-texts, is concerned precisely with the illusory significance of outward appearances. In *The 39 Steps*, Hannay's basic resiliency and responsiveness to events is clued precisely by his ability to manipulate appearances via costume changes (he poses as a milkman; he is saved by the hymnal in the pocket of the crofter's coat) or by self-dramatization (at the political meeting and the hotel). In *Sabotage* the class issue comes up again. On the one hand Mrs. Verloc complains of financial ruin should she be forced to give refunds to the cinema patrons when the power goes out; but on the other hand she doesn't hesitate



to order tailor-made clothes. *To Catch a Thief* is analogous to *The 39 Steps* in this regard; the whole movement of the film is to underscore the arbitrariness of appearances, and the fancy dress ball provides Hitchcock a marvelous opportunity to undercut the clothing code. *North by Northwest* is also concerned with the superficiality of classism and sexism, and

it's significant that Thornhill's elegant blue suit (Leonard: "He's a well-tailored one, isn't he?") is disheveled and eventually discarded by film's conclusion. A similar "devaluation" of clothing marks the changes in the Tippi Hedren character in *The Birds*. Even Marion Crane in *Psycho* undergoes this process of "undressing" and, while she dies nude, it is less her nudity which is called into question, as we see in retrospect, than the false costume of her murderer.

A special case of the clothing motif, special not for the functioning of the motif but for the clothing involved, is found in *I Confess*, where the thematic correlation involves religion rather than class. Father Logan's cassock is nevertheless emblematic of his retreat from experience: and it is therefore appropriate that the cassock should be the strongest evidence in the murder case against him.

One final article of clothing remains to be mentioned: eyeglasses. Donald Spoto writes on this motif at length in *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*, and we need not recapitulate the entire argument here. It is sufficient to point out the high correlation in Hitchcock between characters who wear eyeglasses and characters who evidence some sort of denial of human relationships, notably Pamela in *The 39 Steps* (she is reading when Hannay first sees her), the judge in *The Paradine Case*, Guy's wife in *Strangers on a Train*, Thorvald in *Rear Window*, The Professor in *North by Northwest*, the highway cop in *Psycho*,



Strutt in *Marnie*, etc. One must be careful, however, not to overgeneralize. Certain characters who wear eyeglasses are more victims than perpetrators: one thinks of Lina in *Suspicion* and Professor Lindt in *Torn Curtain*. The point in every case, however, involves the problematics of vision, which is the crucial element for our discussion.



Another iconographic system relevant to the reading theme involves furniture, generally chairs of the wing-backed variety,

couches, and/or beds. These may best be thought of as "sites of isolation." Characters may retreat into them of their own volition (Lina in *Suspicion* repeatedly hides in her high-backed chair, as does Ruth in *I Confess*, and Lina eventually retreats into her lavish bed and into the corner of the front seat of the car as she and Johnny drive along the cliff; *Shadow of a Doubt* begins with Uncle Charlie in bed and continues, in the first Santa Rosa sequence, to show Young Charlie in the same position) or characters may be forced into isolation. Thus Erica in *Young and Innocent* is ordered to her bedroom by her father; thus

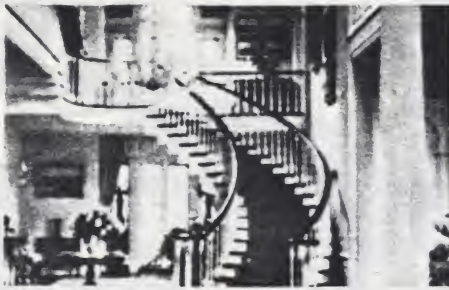


Alicia in *Notorious* is made a prisoner of her bed and bedroom. And the point in both sets of circumstances, a point having obvious visual consequences, is that such isolation cuts people off from each other. Backs are turned. Faces are hidden. Feelings are repressed. People cannot see or be seen if they get stuck in such physical circumstances.

An obvious elaboration of this correlation between physical isolation and visual/moral distortion involves architecture generally. Perhaps the most common use of the architectural motif is the "naturalistic" correlation between the upper class and its architectural context. Hitchcock's films routinely take place in high-class hotel rooms or flats (*The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The 39 Steps*, *Rebecca*, *Rope*, *To Catch a Thief*, *North by Northwest*), mansions (*The 39 Steps*, *Rebecca*, *Suspicion*, *Spellbound*, *Notorious*, *Strangers on a Train*, *To Catch a Thief*, *North by North-*



west, *Marnie*) or townhouses (*The Lodger*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Topaz*, *Family Plot*). It is generally the case that upper-class characters are called into question by their complacency—and their marvellously elegant living quarters are clearly a factor in this. In strict visual terms, the high ceilings and elegant moldings and columns and bookcases create an almost excessively ordered graphic context; and in nearly every example something very un-orderly and extra-

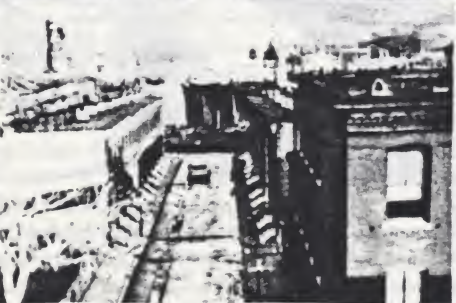


ordinary takes place within it.

Another special architectural characteristic associated with upper-class living quarters in Hitchcock is the staircase. Hitchcock's staircases are famous—both Spoto and Maurice Yacowar (in *Hitchcock's British Films*) deal with their expressive possibilities at some length—but a few observations are in order here. First of all, staircases tend to segregate space as well as connect it: at the head of the staircase one generally finds the "living" quarters. This in and of itself is ominous, for isolating sexuality from sociality. Furthermore, those rich enough to have staircases are usually rich enough to afford separate sleeping quarters for husband and wife, as we see in



Rebecca and *Marnie* (in *Notorious* we see twin beds, while in *Suspicion* Lina eventually chooses to sleep alone in the double bed). If love is going to flourish under such circumstances it is usually necessary to get out of the house, so as to overcome the isolation implicit in the domestic architecture. Thus in *Rebecca*, for example, it takes the night in the beach house to set things



straight, while the resolution of *Marnie* takes place in the Baltimore row house of *Marnie's* mother. And similarly in *Suspicion* and *Notorious*: both films conclude, like *Marnie*, with the central characters (the couple) driving away from the camera (though the final troubling image in *Notorious* is of Sebastian walking back up the front steps into the mansion).

A less class-bound architectural setting in Hitchcock involves back rooms or basements, both of which are associated with isolation or dissimulation and hence with the reading theme. The earliest Hitchcock basement in my experience is found in *The Lodger*. Daisy's parents spend most of their time in their below-street-level kitchen, where Daisy's father eagerly reads newspaper accounts of The Avenger's latest exploits; and their willingness to "misread" Drew is partly a class matter. They see themselves as "lower class," a status reflected in their choice of living quarters, and hence their readiness to think ill of those "above" them. The wine cellar in



Notorious is another sort of basement, and it also reflects issues of class and sex. That it is a "wine cellar" marks it as an index of class; that it contains Sebastian's "secret," a secret which he refuses to share with his wife, marks it as an index of sexuality (or the lack of it); and that the secret is ultimately connected with the technology of mass murder marks it as an index of detachment and denial (we have already seen one murder connected with "wine" from that cellar). A less malign version of the Hitchcock basement crops up briefly in *To Catch a Thief*. After Robie has conferred with his ex-resistance colleague, Bertani, he ducks out to avoid the police, departing through the restaurant's wine cellar to a boat tied up below; and again we see the correlation of architecture and class. Bertani himself, Foussard (the wine steward) and Foussard's daughter, Danielle, conspire to make their own fortune and let Robie take the rap for their thievery (Danielle's motives are more sexual than financial, it should be noted). The point to make, however, is that the false sense of deprivation which drives them to crime is reflected by the wine cellar setting: Foussard and Bertani feel themselves to be "too low"; yet their basement is full of expensive wines. Other such basements, reflecting similar issues, are to be found in *Psycho* (the "fruit-cellar" of the Bates House where Norman keeps his mother's stuffed corpse) and *Family Plot* (the secret basement room where Adamson

hides his kidnap victims—and where he and his wife are themselves eventually trapped). Both are discussed at length by Spoto.

"Back rooms" in Hitchcock, as opposed to basements, serve to put the focus more on dissimulation, more on the contrast between fact and facade, than on the contrast between "upper" and "lower" social strata. Thus in *The Lodger* we see several "backstage" sequences where girls take off costumes and wigs (usually blonde) and then put on street clothes, another sort of costume. Some of them even don Brunette curls as camouflage. In *The Man Who Knew Too Much* the terrorists who kidnap Betty Lawrence keep her in a secret apartment suite, the only entrance to which is hidden behind the walls of the vestry of the Temple of the Sun. In *Sabotage* the "front" of the Verloc place is the Bijou Cinema, which functions for Mrs. Verloc as financial salvation (hence the irony that Stevie should be killed by an exploding film tin), while the "back" is the living quarters. The point here, I think, is less that someone is trying to obscure sight (as the terrorists do in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*) than that Mrs. Verloc's sense of priorities, her "moral sight," is out of alignment. She quite literally puts money first (we first see her in the ticket cage) and accordingly "living," specified here as involving her sexual relationship to her husband and thereafter to Ted, takes the "back" seat. A similar analogy between "back rooms" and perverted sexuality can be seen in *Psycho*. At the film's beginning Sam refuses to marry Marion because, among other reasons, he cannot see the two of them living in the back room of the hardware store he inherited from his debt-ridden father. As a result, Marion steals \$40,000 and winds up at the Bates motel, where she sees two "back rooms"—the office behind the motel desk, an office decorated with Norman's stuffed birds (emblematic of his relationship with his mother—and her corpse), and the bathroom of her motel room. The bathroom is the last room she ever sees, although the fault is not so much hers as it is Sam's and Norman's. Both men confuse the fact of love with the appearance of it and both suffer for their sins.

Two special-case uses of architectural motifs relevant to the reading issue deserve brief mention here. A variant of the "back room" motif is the glass-enclosed office. We see this briefly in the "newspaper" sequence of *The Lodger*: there are glass partitions (as I recall) in the London newsroom that we see. But the earliest expressive use of the glass room figure, in my experience, is in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934). While Bob Lawrence is searching the murdered agent's room, looking for the message in the shaving brush, Jill Lawrence, who was dancing with the agent at the moment the fatal shot was fired, is taken to the office of the hotel manager for interrogation, as we discover when Bob himself is brought down to await interrogation in his turn.

Bob is forced to cool his heels in a glass-walled outer office; and we only hear snatches of Jill's interrogation as the glass door to the office proper is repeatedly opened and closed. This is played almost comically at first. Bob tries his best school-book French and German in an attempt to get word to the British Consul; and his attempts to get in to see Jill are constantly frustrated. Suddenly, however, he is handed a note, informing him of the kidnapping of this daughter and warning him not to talk—at which point he barges through that door and, on a pretext, gives Jill the note.



The thematic implications of all this are fairly clear: glass cuts off communication and thereby threatens the life of Betty Lawrence. It is therefore necessary and proper for Bob to "crash" the glass-wall barrier. (The film's final shootout escalates the breaking of glass.) Similar correlations of glassed-in offices with executive (class) isolation, problematic communications and the endangerment of life are seen in *To Catch a Thief*, *Psycho*, *Marnie*, and *Topaz*. In the former the office is Bertani's adjoining the kitchen of his restaurant, and it is within the glass walls of his office that Bertani dissemblingly promises to help John Robie track down his double. In *Psycho* the glass office is that of Marion's boss; and while it is Marion who dissembles in this case, her deception is prompted, at least in part, by the crassness and dishonesty of her boss's high-spending client. Cassidy places himself both above Marion (as he leans on her desk) and apart from her (as he goes into her boss's air-conditioned office). The glass room in *Topaz* recalls that of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in that the glass doors of the florist's walk-in refrigerator, behind which Dubois and Devereaux scheme to photograph Cuban military

documents, block out sound—a motif which is extended in the following sequence at the Hotel Teresa. To be sure, one could argue that glass encourages rather than hinders vision; but in *To Catch a Thief*, *Psycho*, and *Marnie*, at least, the glass is in some sense opaque. Thus we get the egg splattering across the glass in *Thief*; the glass wall of the *Psycho* office is tinted (which associates it with the dark glasses of the cop whom we see later in the film); and executive offices in *Marnie*, both Strutt's and Ward's office at Rutland & Co., feature pebbled glass doors and/or partitions.

In general, then, we can say that glass in Hitchcock represents a tenuous and ultimately false sort of orderliness or emotional security—false for being predicated on the erection and maintenance of barriers between people: barriers to sight, to sound, barriers ultimately to the communication and comprehension necessary to seeing the world whole. Care must be taken, as before, not to overgeneralize. In *The Birds* there are moments when glass serves a more positive but related function. Specifically, there are two instances in *The Birds* when Melanie Daniels risks her life, quite intuitively and immediately, to go to the aid of others (during the bird attack on the school and, only moments later, during the attack on the restaurant and service station). And in both instances glass enclosures appear (the white station wagon by the side of the road, the phone booth), as if out of nowhere, to provide her momentary shelter. The shelter in both cases, however, is temporary and fragile, and both need to be left behind before the film concludes.

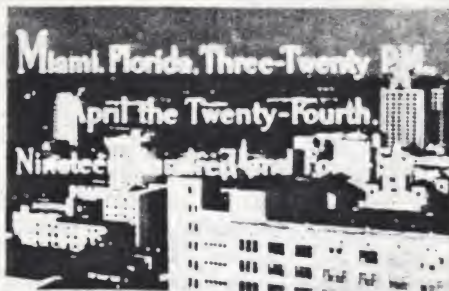
At which point we have already touched upon the second special case architectural motif: automobiles and trains. As enclosures, cars and trains in Hitchcock carry ominous implications. Thus a recurrent scene in Hitchcock involves a car driving at high speeds on a coastal or mountain road (*Suspicion*, *Notorious*, *To Catch a Thief*, *North by Northwest*, *The Birds*, *Family Plot*). Sometimes the high speeds evidence naïveté (as in *To Catch a Thief* when the cool Grace Kelly drives), sometimes cynicism (as in *Notorious* when an inebriated Ingrid Bergman is behind the wheel), and in *Family Plot* the speed sequence is initiated by external influence: Maloney drains the brake fluid from Lumley's car. But in nearly every case excessive speeds are correlated with visual distortion and/or subjectivity (the montage tends to accelerate into closeups and point-of-view shots) and potential death (we repeatedly see automobile tires careening along the edge of a cliff). Trains represent a similar sort of danger. Train passengers, like car passengers, are often trapped in their vehicles. Thus in *The Lady Vanishes* Iris and Gilbert, *et al*, become sitting ducks when their railroad car is sidetracked and assaulted. In *The 39 Steps* and *North by Northwest* the protagonists are both pursued by police and only ingenuity allows



them to escape undetected despite the constricted hallways and sleeping compartments. And in *Strangers on a Train* Guy allows the constraints of train travel to further his relationship with Bruno: the dining

car is full, so Guy dines with Bruno in the latter's compartment.

All of which said, trains and cars are also vehicles, capable of movement, and it's by taking that possibility to heart that Hitchcock protagonists are often enabled to recover their identity. Thus Hannay and



the implications are negative. Cities can dehumanize and disfigure, as is evidenced in the opening sequences of *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Notorious*, *I Confess*, *Strangers on a Train*, *The Wrong Man*, *To Catch a Thief*, *North by Northwest*, *Psycho*, *The Birds*, and *Frenzy*: in every case long shot city-scape *mise-en-scène* is immediately correlated with sexual deviance, familial disunity, or the objectification of human beings. Thus we seldom see faces (they are either too distant or absent from the frame altogether) or the faces we do see are generally cold and grim (e.g., the corpse-like visage of Uncle Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt*, the marching soldiers in *Topaz*). Put another way, cities can isolate people from one another and the isolation has its visual referent in the countless box-like buildings or windows so frequently seen in these sequences.

Another geographical motif, likewise raising the isolation issue, involves country houses or mansions, often seen as solitary dwellings in otherwise empty landscapes. Early examples of this, reflecting also on issues of religion and class, are the crofter's cottage and Professor Jordon's country house in *The 39 Steps*. Mansions similar to the Jordon mansion, and occupied by equally elegant yet duplicitous characters,



are to be found in *Spellbound* (the "Green Manors" sanatorium for the sake of which Dr. Murchison commits murder), *Notorious* (Sebastian's mansion), *North by Northwest* (Vandamm's glass-walled country house), and *Topaz* (the "safe" house occupied by the Russian defector). Other



mansions, though occupied by less reprehensible characters, are seen in *Rebecca* (Manderley) and *To Catch a Thief*. And we see less sumptuous but no less isolated dwellings in *Psycho* (the Bates house) and *The Birds* (the Brenner house). In every case geographic isolation both results from and reflects an inability or unwillingness to see the world whole; and in most such instances (*Topaz*, again, being the exception) characters are forced by ultimately benevolent circumstances to leave their isolation, however temptingly secure that isolation might seem. Thus Manderley finally burns down in *Rebecca*. Thus Ingrid Bergman leaves Green Manors to marry Gregory Peck in *Spellbound*; and in *Notorious* she leaves Sebastian's house with Cary Grant. Thus Cary Grant is forced to come down off his mountain top in *To Catch a Thief* and at film's end he returns but is followed by his wife and mother-in-law to be. He is not the "lone wolf" he thought he was. The "benevolence" in *Psycho* is less personal (in that no specific character in the film is better for it) but it is real nevertheless and attends upon the fact that Norman is finally forced out of his mansion and back into society where he can be locked up. He will no longer be able to "stuff" any "birds" and the basic justice of the universe is evidenced by the fact the "birds," specifically Marion and Lila "Crane" of "Phoenix," are the primary agents of his downfall.

A similarly problematic "benevolence" is at work in *The Birds*. The standard view of the film is that the bird attacks are ultimately senseless and unmotivated and represent the basic absurdity underlying human existence. Ultimately, however, the "absurdist" view hinges on three incidents: the attack on the farmer, the second attack on the school children, and the attack which kills Annie Hayworth. All other attacks can be correlated with specific instances of human coldness or superficiality. There are, we should remark, only three deaths in the film, and the second, that of the loudmouthed salesman, represents no problem: he blows himself up for not paying close enough attention to the world around him. And ultimately the same can be said for the only other two victims, Dan



Fawcett and Annie Hayworth. Both live alone and both are in some sense isolated from their communities, Fawcett in his farmhouse (which we see in extreme long shot), Annie Hayworth in her cottage, which is generally hidden from view by the schoolhouse which stands between her



Roger Thornhill both use trains as a means of discovery as well as escape. Rather than flee from, they travel to someplace, in search of knowledge. Cars can also function positively. A recurrent Hitchcock ending has the hero and heroine driving off together and their togetherness is significant. Barriers to personal warmth have been overcome (as in *Suspicion*, *Notorious*, *Marnie*, and *The Birds*) and a unity of decorous movement replaces the disunified closeup *découpage* of the speed sequences.

One final iconographic system can be related to the isolation/fixation theme (and hence to the reading theme) in Hitchcock: that of geography. This can be complicated. To begin with, we are discussing a sort of "large-scale" iconography. Geography generally provides a background, almost constantly present and significant, but not obviously dominant. Only on set occasions are we shown a long establishing shot which can "foreground" geography. And in some films, *Suspicion* particularly, relevant geographical factors are less shown than alluded to (we know that Lina was raised in the provinces, but the *mise-en-scène* is constrained and stylized: we never get a long establishing shot of her country village). Secondly, the significance of geographic motifs is often dependent upon the dramatic development of the characters who occupy the space. Thus a recurrent Hitchcock opening or credit sequence will feature long shot views of a city, via moving camera and dissolves, and in most cases

place and the town. In both cases, furthermore, death is associated with sexlessness. Fawcett sleeps alone in a double bed and Annie's presence in Bodega Bay is predicated on maintaining a sexless relationship with Mitch, her former lover. We can thus see her pupils as surrogate children and the most fruitful action she can take is to die saving Cathy. Ultimately, then, the critical crux in *The Birds* comes down to the attack on the schoolhouse; and here the iconography points towards a sounder reading.



The school, as Hitchcock frames it (the camera almost always pointing away from the town so as to isolate the building against the hills, thus obliterating our view of Annie's house) is a visual double of the Bates house in *Psycho*: both are associated with children, isolation, and perversity. The perversity in *The Birds* is of a lesser order; but it is evidence by the nonsense song sung by the children and by their real and oddly unanimous unwillingness to leave school when Annie tells them they are

going home for the day. One senses that their home lives are unpleasant and lonely (as Cathy Brenner's is evidently lonely: hence her eagerness that Melanie stay for the party) and the effect of the attack is to drive the children out of the school and back to the town where the issue of parent/child relationships (a central concern throughout the film, particularly in respect to Mitch and Melanie) can be faced. A similar logic can be seen to underlie the last bird attack, that on the Brenner house, as well. Mitch does his best to read the pattern of the attacks and decides, wrongly it turns out, to board up the house and wait it out. The birds then attack in waves, the second of which finds Melanie isolated and endangered in Cathy's bedroom (that it is a little girl's room is itself ultimately hopeful: Melanie in some sense returns to her girlhood and then finds a new mother, Lydia, to replace the one who deserted her). Finally, the point sinks in: for Melanie's sake and ultimately for the sake of everyone, Mitch decides to leave, to go back to the city, back to civilization which ultimately provides the proper context in Hitchcock for human relationships—despite the fact that cities are themselves difficult places to live in. The problem of reading is a quintessentially human problem for Hitchcock, and a problem which therefore requires a human context for its genuine solution.

A variant of the isolated house is the isolated (provincial) town or city. In some instances this involves vacation spots (a Swiss ski resort in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, a Tyrolean resort in *The Lady Vanishes*, the French Riviera in *To Catch a Thief*—we might even include the small-town amusement park of *Strangers on a Train* here), and vacationers in Hitchcock are usually trying to avoid something, often having to do with sexuality. More commonly, the provincial city is the character's home town and serves to reflect the character's almost willful ignorance of the world outside. The best example of this, of course, is found in *Shadow of a Doubt*, and the movement of the film, both in its general plot action and in its *mise-en-scène*, is to call provinciality, particularly as manifested in sexual relationships, into question. Of course, provinciality is not the only attitude undercut in the film; the city seen in the opening sequence is equally as dead and dissipated as Santa Rosa. The film's general fable thus becomes a fall from innocence to experience, but the fall is nearly overwhelming: hence the ironic conclusion, Charlie and Jack, the film's couple, standing on the steps of the church while the pastor inside preaches a glowing funeral oration for Charlie's murderous same-name uncle.

I Confess presents a special case of the "provincial town" which serves as a large-scale icon of isolation. At one level, certainly, Quebec is a city like any other Hitchcock city. If anything, the opening se-

quence emphasizes its "cityness" by slowly tracking in, behind the credits, from extreme long shot to long shot, with our focus kept constantly on a fortress-like castle which overlooks and dominates the cityscape. The correlation between "cityness" and isolation of people from each other is made remarkably explicit midway through the film when Ruth and Father Logan meet aboard a ferry boat to discuss their relationship. Ruth pleads on behalf of their love affair and Logan assures her of the sincerity of his vocation; and as he pulls away from her, shifting his stance at the rail, the fortress from the credit sequence appears directly between them, as if it were the barrier keeping them apart. The fortress is further equated with Father Logan's cold single-mindedness by an association of Logan with church architecture (we first see him framed in the glass door of the rectory) and by the provincial synonymy of Quebec architecture generally: thus Logan=architecture=fortress. In other words, the church is his fortress, within which the ex-soldier retreats from the world at large. Nevertheless, Quebec's insular status, as a French-speaking city in an English-speaking continent (Hitchcock plays a good deal on the class/language correlation), reinforces the closed-in, small-town quality which Hitchcock's treatment generally accords it. Logan is no less entrapped by his prejudices than are the members of the courtroom mob who demand that he be stripped of his collar: both associate righteousness with sexlessness.



One final "small town" deserves comment: Bodega Bay. Most critics of *The Birds* treat the town as a neutral if not bucolic setting, different from San Francisco in kind rather than degree. But this rings false for reasons both extrinsic and intrinsic to the film. In the context of this discussion we can see how completely uncharacteristic it would be for Hitchcock to treat Bodega Bay differently from any of his other provincial townships. Accordingly, it becomes a critical imperative to look carefully at Bodega Bay, as a "function" in *The Birds*, to see if Hitchcock runs true to form in his treatment of it and whether we should follow form in the significance which we might therefore impart to it. And run true to form he does. I have already discussed the questionable relationship between the town and its school. We can cite





two other factors, one embedded in iconography, the other expressed largely through dialogue, which support the alternative reading. The first involves the "cage" motif which dominates the opening sequence—both in the visuals (the San Francisco pet shop full of cages) and the dialogue (Mitch, a lawyer, talks about putting Melanie in a cage). This cage motif is picked up in the Bodega Bay general store where Melanie asks for directions. The storekeeper stands behind a cage, in the post office corner of the room, and behind him are post office boxes, cages of another sort. Furthermore, when he stands with Melanie on the porch, to point out the Brenner place across the bay, we see the half-glassed door to the store (glass again) which features a wanted poster (again, the equation of people and cages) next to a notice about dog licenses. I take this correlation of people, cages, and animals to be ominous on the face of it—even if at this early point in the film we cannot tie this ominousness specifically to Bodega Bay as a whole. But it takes Hitchcock only a few more minutes of screen time to tie the thematic knot. Thus Melanie and the storekeeper go back into the store, where Melanie asks the name of Mitch's sister. The storekeeper is unsure, quarrels with a disembodied voice emanating from behind a row of boxed goods, and then suggests "Alice." Melanie presses him—she

needs the exact name—and he suggests that Melanie go ask the school teacher. When she talks to Annie Hayworth only a few moments later, however, she is informed that Mitch's sister's name is Cathy. And Annie explains the storekeeper's confusion by reference to the fact that the mail never gets delivered to the right place: as postmaster and storekeeper he may be the most frequently visited man in town, quite literally the center of the community, but he doesn't know who lives where. It all adds up. Bodega Bay may look like (may want to look like) a town of friendly neighbors, but that is not the state of affairs. Most of the people we see (other than children) are transients (including Melanie and, to a degree, Mitch), and the few natives we do see are a bunch of self-serving provincials: the bar-



keeper is worried about lawsuits, the ornithologist spouts ornithology in the face of facts, the boat skipper refuses to help Mitch mobilize the town, and the local policeman is laughable in his skepticism. The irony is clear. The birds flock together when, by natural instinct, they shouldn't; and the people refuse to "flock" in any positive sense (some few cower together at the rear of the restaurant), though by all ethical standards "flocking" ought to be a natural state of human affairs. Thus Hitchcock, via his special effect birds, *makes* them get together, almost despite themselves. It is therefore necessary that Melanie and the Brenners leave Bodega Bay behind; and hence the appropriateness of the film's concluding image, which has them leaving that Bodega Bay house and driving into the



bird-dominated distance. Bodega Bay is still visible on the horizon (as a final reminder of the danger of isolation), but by accepting vulnerability (to each other and to the birds) Melanie and the Brenners embrace an essential quality of civilization.

One further geographical motif remains to be considered in connection with the vision issue, although the concluding image of *The Birds* is an instance of it: persons or people isolated in nature or space. In beginning this discussion of geographical iconography and significance I pointed out the necessity for keeping in mind the relationship of character to environment in determining the thematic value of geography in Hitchcock. Thus it is possible for opening city shots to be negative in their connotations, for being associated with characters who sag into big-city facelessness; while concluding city shots, as in *Sabotage* and *Marnie*, can be positive, for showing us characters who accept the vulnerability of human existence. A similar sort of fine tuning is necessary in discussing the "isolation in nature" motif. To be too isolated in nature, to be settled into it by means of a domicile or mansion, is either to deny one's own vulnerability, or it reflects an attempt to increase the vulnerability of others when the isolated character is one like Jordon in *The 39 Steps* or Vandamm in *North by Northwest*, who works as an agent of a foreign power. And yet a recurrent scene in Hitchcock has a central character (or characters) at hazard in an open landscape or, in special cases, on rooftops. The classic examples here involve the



two chase-on-the-heath scenes in *The 39 Steps* and the cropdusting and Mt. Rushmore scenes in *North by Northwest*. Both Hannay and Roger Thornhill initially represent a trivial, sexually cynical city-bound lifestyle (though Hannay, a Canadian rancher, is only temporarily a city-dweller) and to a certain extent their exile to nature is an appropriate comeuppance. Yet in both cases the character willingly takes fortune into his own hands, assumes some real measure of responsibility, for himself if not for others, and this acceptance of vulnerability finds visual expression in long shots of characters (Hannay on the heath; Thornhill in the cornfield) against the background of barren geography. This acceptance of vulnerability, a specifically *visual* vulnerability (both can be seen),

pays off in each case. Hannay's pursuers have difficulty negotiating the landscape (as if the landscape were on Hannay's side) and Thornhill is saved by the petrol truck which appears, as if out of nowhere, to cover him like a protective parent. Furthermore, acceptance of legal/political vulnerability results in (and foreshadows) a corollary acceptance of sexual vulnerability. Thus Hannay and Thornhill each finds himself at



hazard in nature a second time and both are accompanied on the second occasion by a woman. In the earlier film the woman is reluctant at first (for being married to a politician); but in both cases male/female teamwork eventually has positive emotional and political results. Pamela thus helps Hannay to unmask Mr. Memory. And while the entertainer dies as a result (a death which Hitchcock invests with genuine dignity), the defense secrets he carries are not allowed to leave the country and endanger peace. Likewise, it's teamwork between Eve and Roger which prevents Vandamm from taking another batch of secrets, hidden in a piece of statuary, out of another country. And this willingness to take political risks has its payoff when Thornhill pulls Eve up off the cliff and into their nuptial railway berth.

A similar willingness to accept vulnerability and responsibility can be seen to motivate "isolation in nature" or "isolation in space" sequences in *Spellbound*, *To Catch a Thief*, and *Marnie*. The *Spellbound* sequence ties the vulnerability theme and the reading theme neatly together. In order to break the code of John Ballantine's amnesia, Constance Peterson insists that they return to the scene of Dr. Edwardes's murder, a Vermont ski slope. There they ski the same slope, straight towards the edge of a cliff, and the alternating long shot/closeup *découpage* simultaneously emphasizes vulnerability in space (as they approach cliff's edge) and the psychic vulnerability which attends upon their attempt to relive and re-read Ballantine's past. Significantly, it is John's psychic breakthrough, his "re-seeing" of the childhood accident, which then allows him to pull Constance and himself off their skis before they go over the edge. In *To Catch a Thief* the "isolation" motif is architectural as well as geographical—but, like the corresponding scene in *Spellbound*, it involves an implicit acknowledgement of sexual

dependency (Robie needs the help of Francie, and that of her mother and Houghson as well, to distract the attention of the police while he waits for his double on the roof of the mansion) and a corollary willingness to take physical and visual risks in space (when he chases Danielle he is caught in police spotlights). The isolation sequence in *Marnie* likewise involves the correlation of psychic and spatial vulnerability. During the hunt sequence Marnie's fear of blood is triggered by the death of the fox and by the red hunting jackets. Her response is to spur Forio to a gallop and set out pell-mell

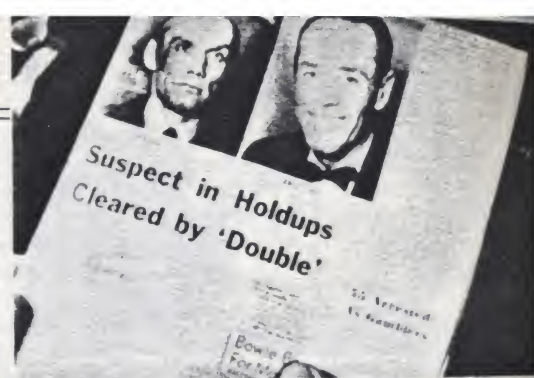


through the fields. To be sure, Marnie does not voluntarily choose to isolate herself from the other hunters in the way that Robie chooses to hunt down his double across the mansion roof. But her willingness to stay at the Rutland mansion and participate in the hunt, to act out her role as Mark's wife despite her desire to flee, is analogous to John Ballantine's willingness to return to the ski slope. Both would rather avoid reality and are to be praised for accepting the vulnerability imaged by their placement in the landscape.

To summarize: Sections III and IV develop the thesis that "reading" is a central metaphor in Hitchcock, writ large in recurrent patterns of narrative action and further specified in and through an iconography of visual distortion and disorder. The present section is concerned with causality. In narrative terms we can say that misreading in Hitchcock results from some form of interpersonal isolation: characters isolate themselves by their denial of human relationships and in their denial they isolate others—and this opposition applies equally well to personal and political motives or circumstances. In iconographic terms causality finds expression in several complementary sets of symbolic associations: isolation can be correlated with clothing, with furnishings, with architecture, and with geography, though in each case the iconography is such that characters can deny or reverse its negative implications. Image and theme are thus fused in a complex economy of expression which bodies forth Hitchcock's dynamic vision of both the dangers and the possibilities of human existence.

VI. The Double Figure

As generally employed in Hitchcock criticism, the "wrong man" motif involves an implicit corollary which has both narrative and iconographic consequences. This corollary motif is the "double" or "mirror"



figure, by which characters are encouraged to "read" or "reread" themselves in or through their opposites.

I have already referred to one species of this character/narrative trope in remarking upon the similarity of action evidenced by "misread" and "misleading" characters: to a certain degree they are "mirror" images of each other. Classical examples of this character parallelism are the two Charlies in *Shadow of a Doubt* and Guy and Bruno in *Strangers on a Train*. Indeed, Hitchcock usually suggests such a parallelism by means of *mise-en-scène* or *découpage* long before it becomes explicit in dialogue or plot action. Thus in *Strangers on a Train* we begin with parallel sequences, of Guy and Bruno's feet, respectively, as each departs his taxi and boards the train, and the parallelism of activity is further stressed by cross cutting. Once the two have met, their interconnectedness is further reinforced by jewelry (both carry icons of questionable sexual relationships), by use of the shot/reverse-shot figure, by means of "rhyming" shadows, by means of profile two shots with the two facing—"mirroring"—each other across a table, etc. And implicit in all this, at least as critics have usually characterized the implication, is a "transference of guilt" from the apparently evil character to the conventionally innocent one: hence the frequent critical discussions of the original sin theme in Hitchcock and hence as well his reputation as ironist and prankster. If guilt can be transferred between characters, it can also be transferred to audiences who seem to revel in a complicity which they never overtly acknowledge. The thematic pay-off, then, for viewers who "get the point" of the film, is the chastening acceptance of their own capacity for evil as it is mirrored in the activity of Hitchcock's characters.

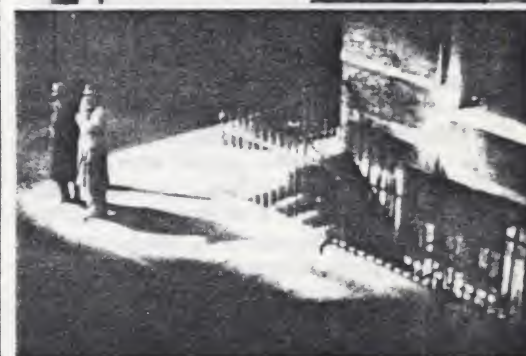
I do not wish to suggest that the "complicity" theme is non-existent or unimportant in Hitchcock—but it is clearly less central than some would have us believe. For example, the acceptance of guilt is generally a first step rather than the last. It is a predicate of action (as in *Spellbound* and *Marnie*) rather than a product. And often explicit acknowledgements of guilt on the part of focal characters are lacking altogether. Rather, it is frequently the case that characters take actions which are consonant with an increased sense of personal and social responsibility without ever finding it necessary to accept direct culpability for actual, already committed sins. *Strangers on a Train* is a case in point. Guy never

acknowledges or accepts the proposition that his guilt in the matter of Marion's death is equal to Bruno's. He rather accepts the fact that he appears more guilty than Bruno and therefore endeavors to establish the legibility of his innocence. And there is no necessity within the film that he accept the accusation. If the film calls anything into question it is precisely the ready attribution of guilt. Bruno attributes to Guy a desire to kill his own wife (Guy's sin here is that he does not reject the exchange-of-murders proposition explicitly enough: because he doesn't take Bruno or life as seriously as he should); and Ann and her sister each attribute the murder to Guy in a way which dehumanizes them both (Barbara gets her comeuppance at the party sequence when Bruno "strangles" her). More significantly, it is the willingness to accompany attribution with punishment that allows the police to shoot into the amusement park crowd and kill the merry-go-round operator. As a result, the ride spins out of control and eventually off its axis, injuring a great many people, when the little old man tries to put on the brakes. Indeed, we are given opportunity ourselves to attribute false motives to Guy when he goes to the Anthony mansion to tell Bruno's father about his mad son. The treatment of Guy's entering the Anthony house is sufficiently ambiguous—Guy sneaks in with a flashlight and Bruno's map—to allow the attribution. But in retrospect he does nothing inconsistent with his eventually professed intention to tell the truth about Bruno. His sneaking into the house can be credited to caution: in case he's being followed (he wouldn't want to ring doorbells or call attention to the house by having the lights turned on) or in case Bruno hadn't left (a reasonable fear, as it turns out, for Bruno hadn't left as Guy had asked him to: Bruno rather waits for Guy in his father's bed). And the moment when Guy stops outside the bedroom door to shift the gun, Bruno's gun, from one pocket to another can be directly related to his intention to expose Bruno. The gun, like his own lighter, is an icon of guilt which Guy can present as evidence of the truth of his story. It is altogether reasonable that he would "check" his evidence before going in to lay out his case (just as Manny Balestrero checks the insurance policy in his coat pocket before entering the offices of Associated Life in *The Wrong Man*). The point of *Strangers on a Train*, at least as far as Guy is concerned, has little to do with whether or not Guy accepts guilt for killing Marion. It is whether or not he takes Bruno, and the chaos which Bruno represents, seriously and acts in responsible accord with that seriousness, as he does when he tries to tell Mr. Anthony of Bruno's illness; as he does when he turns his back on Bruno and walks away, despite the fact that Bruno holds a gun on him; as he does during the final fight sequence when he again accepts vulnerability by turning his back on Bruno—this time in order to rescue the little boy.

None of which prevents us from comprehending the parallels of action and character which Hitchcock establishes in *Strangers on a Train*. But to see the degree to which Guy and Bruno "mirror" each other in their capacity for irresponsible, self-serving behavior, a capacity verging on madness in Bruno's case, is to provide the very context in which Guy's actions gain positive significance. To be sure, Guy's actions are self-serving, to the extent that he is trying to clear himself of a murder charge. But, as is often the case when one of Hitchcock's central characters assumes a responsible human stance, service to self and service to others become one and the same. To establish his own innocence it becomes necessary for Guy to establish Bruno's guilt, something which the police are unable or unwilling to do. Maintaining social order thus becomes a personal responsibility (it is the refusal to take it personally that condemns the judge we see at the Senator's party). If Guy doesn't stop him Bruno will no doubt kill again (like Norman in *Psycho* or Rusk in *Frenzy*). The irony, however, is that so many people have to die or suffer injury before Bruno can be stopped. And the film provides little evidence that the society within it has benefitted from Guy's experience. The police treat the whole thing as just one more bit of work to be cleared up and they let it go at that. So what the film lacks is less a "transference of guilt" than a "transference of responsibility." Indeed, the film's conclusion, Guy and Ann, on a train, denying a human relationship when they get up and walk away from another "stranger," evidences how easy it is to fall back into old habits. Nevertheless, the point to make here is simply that the "transference of guilt" formula only represents one potentiality of the double motif in Hitchcock. To look for it at the expense of other such potentialities is only to invite disappointment.

The significance of "doubles" in Hitchcock, both positive and negative, can be better understood by reference to the several varieties of the double figure which we find in Hitchcock's films. The most benign and hopeful sort of "doubling" in Hitchcock is sexual, the pairing of male and female.¹¹ Such pairings are so obvious and seem so obligatorily conventional that we tend to overlook the significance which Hitchcock assigns to them. Very seldom does Hitchcock rely solely on convention to motivate sexual relationships in his movies. Rather, it is generally the case that the central male

and female characters are both variations on a similar theme—they are alike in some crucial and thematically relevant way. In *The 39 Steps*, to take an early example, the central male and female characters share a crucial trait, an unwillingness to believe the crazy story about the 39 steps. Thus Hannay refuses, in a mildly sarcastic manner, to grant credit to the woman he brought home from the Music Hall when she tells him she's a spy. His first impression, indeed, is that she is an actress (=prostitute?). Only when, at her urging, he looks down at the



street below to see the men who followed her to his flat does he believe her story. The pattern then repeats itself with Pamela. She refuses to believe Hannay, on two different occasions, and again a sexual motive is involved (his first move is to kiss her, so as to hid his face from the police, which she, being married, resents). And it is only when



she "looks down," from the second floor landing in the hotel where she and Hannay spend the night as "newlyweds" to see (and hear) Jordon's henchmen reporting in, that she believes Hannay's story in her turn. A common belief in imminent danger shakes them both out of complacency and binds them more strongly together than the handcuffs which had literally made them one being during the chase sequence (and which Hannay still wears in the final shot).

A similar pairing, raising similar issues of sexuality and cynicism, is at the thematic heart of *Notorious*. Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman spend the whole film both adoring and distrusting each other, neither willing to take full responsibility for their love affair, although Devlin seems even less willing than Alicia. In neither case, however, is it a matter of pure cynicism: both have been hurt in love before, Devlin with other women, Alicia with her father, and it is not until Devlin is on the verge of taking another assignment that he finally comes to his senses and re-reads Alicia's malaise as something other than a mere hangover. In fact, he had believed in her all along, had defended her repeatedly when she was not present to hear him, had refused as much as possible to collaborate in the scheme to prostitute her to Sebastian (hence his request for the transfer), but he had simply lacked the courage to face her openly with the fact of his affection until it was almost too late. Indeed, his distrust is almost as deadly to Alicia as the poisoned coffee Sebastian provides her. It is therefore appropriate that Devlin's love should be the necessary antidote. He tells her that he "couldn't see straight" and looks repeatedly into her eyes as he helps her out of her bedroom and down the stairs. Similar sexual pairings are to be found in *Rear Window*, *To Catch a Thief*, *North by Northwest*, *The Birds*, and *Marnie*.

Another version of the sexual pair in Hitchcock involves characters who complement each other by being in some sense opposites. An early example of this is the Daisy/Drew pair in *The Lodger*: he is dark, upper class, and secretive while she is blond, lower class, and entirely open in her dealings with people. As a fashion model she is well aware that appearance does not necessarily match up to reality and hence her ability to see through the circumstantial evidence against Drew. A similar upper class/lower class pairing can be seen in *Rebecca*. Lina and Johnny in *Suspicion* are also opposites of a sort. He's the playboy, she's the spinster. And yet each represents for the other an essential quality that is missing from their life. She wants to be sexual and he wants to be emotionally honest. As opposites they thus mirror and complement each other. The central pair in *Torn Curtain* is an interesting special case. Paul Newman's loyalty to himself and his career is so great that he will risk destroying his relationship with the Julie Andrews character, risking the lives of the members of an

East German underground group along the way, in order to get information that will enable him to regain his position as a government research scientist; anything rather than be a university teacher. Sarah, on the other hand, refused to look out for herself. Thus she follows Michael Armstrong to East Germany and agrees to work with him for the communist government; it's only when she is asked to divulge defense secrets that she refuses to go along with Michael's defection. Again, she puts others first. That she should go to such lengths for Michael is one reason that the film seems cold and centerless: he doesn't really seem worth it.

Far less common than the sexual pairings in Hitchcock are the pairings of the criminal and his double. The number of Hitchcock films which key fairly exclusively on this character alignment are relatively few in my experience. *The Lodger* has this as one theme (among several); and it can be seen at work in varying degrees of centrality in *Young and Innocent*, *Spellbound*, *I Confess*, *Rear Window*, *To Catch a Thief*, *The Wrong Man*, and *North by Northwest*. But only in *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Rope*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Psycho*, *Frenzy*, and *Family Plot* is the dominant configuration. Most of the "mis-read man" films are similar, to be sure, but in many of those the parallelism of criminal to victim is weak because the real criminal plays only a peripheral role in the film. Such is the case in *The Lodger* (we never see The Avenger), in *Young and Innocent* (the murderer is only seen at the beginning and end), in *Spellbound* (we don't know that Murchison killed Edwardes until the final minutes), in *To Catch a Thief* (we don't know that Danielle is Robie's double until the very end), and in *The Wrong Man* (we are never sure whether the second man committed the crimes for which Manny was arrested). Furthermore, direct "transference of guilt" is fairly limited even in those films which play most thoroughly on this sort of character parallelism. *Rope* would probably represent the purest example of the transference of guilt pattern: the two (homosexual) students act out the Nietzschean theories of their professor—but the film is unavailable for viewing and can therefore play little role here. In *Shadow of a Doubt* the attribution of guilt is far less certain. Charlie longs for a savior who will shake things up in Santa Rosa and her Uncle seems to answer to her prayer. But she never theorizes about killing people, as Cadell does in *Rope*. It is her father who plans the perfect murder. And yet for Mr. Newton it is clearly a Hitchcockian pastime. Young Charlie's guilt, such as it is, hinges less on her desires *per se* (though her desires are called into question) than on her reaction to her Uncle once she realizes (a realization which comes from reading newspapers in the town library) what he's done. She hates him, wants him to leave, and threatens to kill him if he doesn't go. In this she seems even more

culpable than Guy in *Strangers on a Train*. Charlie clearly means what she says, and eventually carries out the threat though she does so in self defense. Guy, on the other hand, while avowing that he "could strangle" Marion does so in the heat of anger and out of Marion's presence. In neither case do we get a complete and self-acknowledged transference or acceptance of guilt; and, as I suggested in connection with *Strangers on a Train*, the transference of guilt is less important to both films than a "transference" of knowledge.

Psycho and *Family Plot* also involve parallel characters (or sets of characters) yet in neither case do we get a classic "transference of guilt." The key to *Psycho*, clearly, is the relationship between Marion Crane and Norman Bates. Both are associated with enclosures and entrapment (Marion's flat is nearly identical to the room she eventually takes at the Bates Motel); both are influenced by the emotional legacy of dead mothers (Marion longs for sexual respectability; the "Mrs. Bates" fantasized by Norman to replace the mother he killed out of jealousy likewise insists on a rigorously puritan sexual morality); both are associated with birds (Marion is a "Crane"; Norman stuffs birds as a hobby); etc. But despite the similarities we never associate Marion's guilt with Norman's. She is in no sense responsible for the death of Norman's mother. It is rather the case that Marion sees Norman as a "mirror" of sorts, both visually (the "mirror image" two shots, often with a mirror or reflecting glass between them) and dramatically. As they talk in Norman's bird decorated office, and she sees the fantasy of her longed for "private island" made real in Norman's oppressive solitude, she comes to the understanding that her own problems, both sexual (*vis à vis* Sam) and social (*vis à vis* the money she's stolen) have to be faced up to: she cannot run away from either without losing her identity. Thus she decides to return to Phoenix and she uses her own name when saying goodnight to Norman.

It is important to remark on what happens here. Marion "identifies" with Norman only to the extent that she recognizes an analogy between his situation and her own. And by recognizing the aspect of herself in him she gains the knowledge necessary to lessen the degree of their similarity by changing her situation.¹² She will *not* be like Norman if she can help it. Madness lies exactly in the opposite direction, in the over-identification of one personality with another; and it's that madness, incarnate in Norman/Mrs. Bates, that finally does Marion in. As viewers, however, we are kept—by means of cutting, editing, and the visual obstruction provided by the plastic shower curtain—from recognizing "Mother" as Norman. Through the rest of the film, then, we identify with Norman and his attempts to cover up for his mother—and only in retrospect does this "identification" carry an implication of complicity. Furthermore,

to feel sympathy for Norman is *not* to desire the death of Arbogast or Lila. What is really horrifying about *Psycho* is not the magnitude of events nor our complicity in them, but the commonplace nature of their origins. The Bates house is far less bizarre than we might have imagined and Norman's madness is rooted in nothing more unusual than a frightened boy's love for his mother.

Family Plot displays a similar pattern of action and implication. Like Norman Bates, Arthur Adamson (*né* Rainbird) is "deserted" by his mother before the film begins (Norman's mother takes a lover; Adamson's mother gives him up for adoption to protect the family name) and the result in both cases is violence (Norman kills his mother, her lover, Arbogast, Marion, and several other young women; Adamson kills his foster parents, the Shubridges, by arson) and the confusion of identity (Norman dresses up like Mother; Adamson "buries" his childhood self; Eddie Shubridge, while Blanche and Lumley try to uncover the Rainbird heir—who is Adamson). The point to make here, however, is that Blanche, who functions as Adamson's double in the film, is not at all implicated in Adamson's original act of violence. If anything, Blanche (like Marion in *Psycho*) almost becomes a victim of violence. Adamson fears that Blanche and Lumley are on to his kidnapping racket and is willing to kill to eliminate the threat. Once again we have the double figure, then, but without a transference of guilt. The figure functions, rather, to raise issues of similarity and likeness, to set forth a continuum of actions and motives (as in *Psycho*) and the figure does its job if we come to understand those traits shared by Adamson and Blanche (and by the two couples generally) and those traits, like the willingness to kill, which they *don't* share. It is far more a matter of knowledge than guilt.

No doubt *Frenzy*, among Hitchcock's later films, best embodies the transference of guilt pattern.¹³ Richard Blaney (R.B.) and Bob Rusk (B.R.) are close friends, one divorced, the other never-married. More importantly, both are "frenetic" *vis à vis* sexuality—and they share the same sexual partners: Blaney's ex-wife (whom Rusk murders/rapes) and Babs, Blaney's barmaid girl friend (who also falls victim to Rusk's apparent gentility). Blaney's "frenzy," however, involves publicly expressed anger towards his ex-wife's sexual cynicism (she runs a matrimonial bureau); and it seems clear that his habit of expressing his anger serves as a safety valve. It is only when denied the freedom to be publicly angry (i.e., when he is convicted of the necktie murders and shut away) that he finally allows that anger to get out of hand: he escapes from custody and "kills" Rusk with a jack handle. It is only a Hitchcockian benevolence that the "Rusk" he kills is already dead, is in fact Rusk's latest victim. Rusk himself, on the other hand, evidences

a behavior pattern exactly opposite to that of Blaney. Where Blaney is "public" in expressing his "frenzy," Rusk is "private." Once again we see the correlation between privacy and perversity (hence the ominousness of that long tracking shot from Rusk's door, down the stairway and out of the building—the camera seems "sinful" for withdrawing). And to the extent that Blaney becomes private in the same sense (the last scene takes place in Rusk's flat) we do have a "transference of guilt."

Even here, however, there is a mediating factor which short circuits the transference of guilt, if not from Rusk to Blaney, at least from Blaney to the audience. That factor is Inspector Oxford—who comes increasingly to occupy the focal position in the film. Oxford thus becomes a third term in the film's thematic matrix. Like Blaney and Rusk he is associated with food or appetite (Blaney is a bartender; Rusk is a fruit wholesaler; Oxford's wife is a gourmet cook); and also like the other two men he is associated with some sort of sexual disfunction: Mrs. Oxford complains that he cannot stay awake at night. Oxford differs from the other two men, however, in maintaining an appropriate balance of public and private (we alternatively see him in his office and at his flat) and it's that balance, specifically his ability to correlate his own humanity with his public responsibility, that enables him to "read" Rusk's guilt and thereby prevent further murders (beyond that of the dead girl found in Rusk's bed in the final scene.) The larger point of the film, then, which incorporates but is not exhausted by the transference of guilt between Blaney and Rusk, involves an understanding of the relationship (and difference) between the capacity for private sinfulness on the one hand and its enactment on the other. It is precisely that understanding which enables Oxford to reach the conclusion that Blaney did not kill his wife. That is, Oxford recognizes a similarity between Blaney and himself (both men are in some sense estranged from their wives, though Blaney more so than he) and that recognition causes him to doubt the legitimacy of Blaney's conviction: estrangement does not necessarily entail homicide.

None of which is intended to argue that the character trope of the-criminal-and-his-double is unimportant to Hitchcock or to Hitchcock criticism. I suggested just the contrary in connection with *Strangers on a Train*. But accuracy to fact requires that we place it in context. This particular species of the double figure in Hitchcock is less common than the sexual double. Furthermore, the significance of the criminal-and-his-double trope is generally less directly pointed *vis à vis* the spectator than critics often describe it. As viewers we do not become "guilty" by any metaphor of transference. Rather, at its most emphatic, we become "implicated" via a "recognition" of "likeness." Even in *Family Plot*, where direct transference is at its weakest, we find

this implication structure at work. The primary focus of our empathetic attention is the Blanche/Lumley couple. We sense, I believe, a measure of similarity between Blanche and Lumley and ourselves (this assumption of similarity ought probably to be understood as a convention of reading which is generic to narrative cinema). Through the course of the film we are then forced to extend our recognition to include Fran and Adamson, who thus come to represent a "possibility" inherent in our own behavior. We *could* be like them. And recognizing that lends moral force to the moment toward the end of the film when Lumley shuts the door which ensnares them in their own secret room. We threaten ourselves by allowing our capacity for selfishness and isolation free play. But only by recognizing that capacity can we place it in a necessary framework or perspective.

One final double figure demands attention, both for itself and for the interplay which it introduced into certain Hitchcock films. Thus far the double tropes we describe have consisted of two characters: male/female or criminal/victim. In Hitchcock's political films we see another sort of doubling—the pairing of conflicting spy or intelligence organizations. The most remarkable component of this pairing, above and beyond the fact that each term in the pair consists of multiple characters (which allows for possible sub-set variations on the double figure, particularly in *Topaz*), involves a precise lack of differentiation. Partly, as I have already suggested, this results from Hitchcock's tendency *not* to identify the "other" side except as the "other" side: it is a mirror or opposite of "our" side. Furthermore, it is frequently the case that Hitchcock credits members of the "other" side with far more emotional substance than their "our" side counterparts. In *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), for example, we reach an unexpected depth of emotion when Peter Lorre, during the final shoot out with the police, turns to find that his nurse has been shot, he embraces her tenderly, cradles her in his arms, then returns to the firing line with an intensity of purpose previously lacking in his expressions. This is particularly striking in the context provided by the police who storm Lorre's stronghold. Some drink tea and steal candy while others crack cynical, sexist jokes. *Notorious* employs a similar parallel of espionage groups and once again the "other" side, though this time explicitly identified as Nazis-in-exile, is granted a measure of emotional reality far in excess of that shown by the chief representatives of "our" side. Thus Prescott, the head of the Rio office of U.S. Intelligence, is portrayed as a callously self-confident pimp (complete with slicked-back hair and a pencil moustache) while Alex Sebastian, the ostensible ring-leader of the Nazi group, is humanized, via his relationship to his mother and his genuine affection for Alicia, and comes to seem, thereby, a pathetic victim of his

own (and Prescott's) scheming. In this context, indeed, Devlin's refusal to allow Sebastian to escape underscores the degree to which political corruption in a "Nortorious" world infects even the most hopeful relationships. The James Mason character in *North by Northwest* is also humanized. He is genuinely hurt and enraged when he discovers that Eve Kendall is, like Alicia in *Notorious*, a double agent. By contrast, the Professor (Leo G. Carroll) seems altogether too cool and collected and Thornhill rightly berates him for his attitude ("If you fellows can't lick the Vandamms of this world without asking girls like her to bed down with them and fly away with them and probably never come back alive, maybe you better start learning to lose a few cold wars!"). This cold-war cold-bloodedness finds its most vivid expression in *Topaz* where the film's most moving scenes all involve some species of denial: Madame Devereaux refuses to see her husband off on his trip to Cuba, while Rica Parra can only express his love for Juanita de Cordoba by shooting her to death so as to save her from torture.

I suggested, in discussing the isolation theme in Hitchcock, that his attitude toward nationalism is largely negative. Thus it is generally the case in his spy thrillers that couples—the most positive double figures in the Hitchcock lexicon—carry the weight of affirmation. The same interplay of doubles is also generally at work in those films which employ the criminal/victim trope. Such films generally begin with a male character who is misread as his criminal double. The criminal/victim trope is thus initiatory (as is the "transferred guilt" implicit in the figure). The action of the film then requires the "misread man" to establish the evidence of his innocence, often by establishing the guilt of his criminal or espionage double. In most cases it is impossible for the misread man to establish his "legibility" without the help of an outsider and that outsider is generally female. In associative terms we can therefore say that "innocence" in Hitchcock requires the acceptance of sexuality and responsibility. In terms more familiar to Hitchcock criticism; innocence depends upon acceptance of "original sin" which in Hitchcock takes the form of sexuality. Once this responsibility and vulnerability is accepted a second "double" figure is thereby established, that of male and female, which replaces and stands in thematic opposition to the initiatory double figure.

The contrast of doubles can therefore be read as follows: in films where there is something like a genuine transference of guilt the initiatory double generally involves two males. In such films (e.g., *Rope*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Topaz*, *Frenzy*) there is often a strong homosexual subtext. For Hitchcock such characters are too alike, and the movement of the film is generally to establish some thematically relevant and generally sexual difference. *Shadow of a Doubt* represents a special case but again

the criminal/victim pair involves sexual deviance based on too great an identity: the two Charlies are uncle and niece. A similar logic is at work in the spy films. Spy organizations on both sides are generally male dominated. Women within them are either maternal and possessive (the nurse in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, Mrs. Sebastian in *Notorious*) or they serve as ideological prostitutes (Eve in *North by Northwest*). Furthermore, there is often a hint of impotence (Sebastian is too short for Alicia in *Notorious*) or homosexuality (Martin Landau talks about his "women's intuition" in *North by Northwest*). Spy organizations are also, then, too alike; and overmuch likeness is a negative circumstance in Hitchcock (as we see in *Psycho* when Norman becomes his mother). The alternative to both sorts of debilitating likeness is the simultaneous similarity/dissimilarity which characterizes male/female pairings in Hitchcock. Such men and women share an essential complementarity, for sharing certain traits or for mirroring each other's desires, and yet there is also an essential and ultimately healthy difference evidenced by the very fact of their sexuality.

In terms of the sight metaphor, then, we can say that doubles in Hitchcock serve as a perspective device, permitting or requiring a necessary correction or expansion of vision, both ocular (as argued through the iconography of distorted sight and perspective) and moral (as argued through Hitchcock's fables of isolation and detachment). Which is not to say that characters necessarily see themselves reflected in some direct manner in their double. For certain characters this is impossible precisely because the images are identical—they cannot recognize their reflection as a reflection because they do not recognize its otherness (this applies primarily to spies or intelligence agents). In certain other instances, such as *The Lodger*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and *Strangers on a Train*, the mirror effect works obliquely. The logic of the films is such that the initial double

throws the world of the character out of balance (hence the frequent odd angle shots in *The 39 Steps*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Strangers on a Train*, *I Confess*, and *The Wrong Man*) and in attempting to right that balance, by "re-reading" the world—or by insisting that others do so—it is necessary to accept vulnerability, in space, society, and in sexuality. Indeed the world cannot be read without accepting such risks.

In the majority of Hitchcock's films, however, the double figure does indeed give rise to genuine self-reflection precisely via a recognition both of otherness and likeness. In some cases this involves a literal re-reading of the self through recollection, often with the assistance of a right-reader double (*Rebecca*, *Spellbound*, *Marnie*). In other cases self-reflection attends upon a character's recognition that they have been misreading others (e.g., *Suspicion*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *I Confess*, *Frenzy*) in which case the double is often a victim of misreading (in some of these cases the double intentionally misleads, as in *Stage Fright*). And furthermore, in most cases the "reading" works in both directions. John Robie's attempt to read the identity of the criminal who doubles for him in *To Catch a Thief* requires that he re-read his own sense of independence; and requires further that he re-read Francie Stevens as well. Likewise, Francie has to re-read her sexual motives and accept the responsibility which attends upon her commitment to John. She cannot run sexual interference for her mother indefinitely. In *The Birds* Mitch Brenner tends to misread Melanie Daniels, for reasons having to do with class and profession; and he is forced to re-read her under the pressure of the bird attacks. Melanie, similarly, commits errors of a like sort, evidenced primarily by the mixed motives behind





her trip to Bodega Bay; and she too is tested and changed by the bird attacks. Specifically, she comes to reread her relationship to her mother, and the fact that her mother deserted her, a re-reading which she accomplishes by reading Lydia: hence the repeated shots of Melanie paying close attention to Lydia's movements or actions. Mark Rutland's re-reading of Marnie also requires re-reading himself and his motives, as he helps Marnie to re-read hers. And the ultimate effect of all this is generally to put the world of the character, visually, sexually, and socially, back together again—to make it whole by making them whole. Hence the fact that Hitchcock so often ends his films on long shots or group shots. Things are thus put back "in focus" after a period of distortion and disorientation; and it is the "act" of reading that restores visual and moral order.

VII. The Play of Spectation

I suggested early on in this essay that the mind/screen relationship relative to the films of Alfred Hitchcock could be characterized in at least two ways: thematically (in terms of part-whole dramatic logic), and perceptually (in terms of the experiential analogies which may be said to exist between Hitchcock's thematic points and our mode of attending to those points). It will be noted that I give thematics a certain pride of place. This is justified for several reasons.

To begin with, to discuss the thematics of a film, the structure of its implications,

its "ideology" or "ideologic," is to discuss one of several possible mind/screen constructs. Importing a "theme" to a film, via the act of reading, is to make a connection, in the mind of the spectator, between the world within the film, a world the existence of which we read metaphorically, and the world outside the film, a world which includes the spectator.¹⁴ Such and such a pattern of action and imagery thus has aesthetic and cinematic significance precisely to the extent that 1) we purposefully misconstrue (without ignoring) the literal denotation of the images (our knowledge that a certain visual pattern corresponds to, more properly "belongs" to, Cary Grant) in favor of narrative or symbolic connotation (which attends upon our responding to that same pattern "as if" it denoted "Roger Thornhill"); and also to the extent that 2) we recognize some general pattern behind those misconstrued specifics, without which they would be nothing but misconstrued specifics; and a pattern, furthermore, which may be said to embody some humanly relevant assertion of value or attitude.¹⁵ We might say of Eisenstein's *October*, for example, that it celebrates a disciplined, self-aware sort of revolutionary energy, an energy which finds its most perfect and appropriate expression in the manipulation of history, reality, and language for revolutionary ends. We might say a good deal more. We might say something altogether different or contradictory. We do not need to say anything on particular occasions if we choose not to play the role of critic. We need not even believe that such statements exhaust every aspect of a work (experience indicates just the contrary . . . that works cannot be so exhausted). But the likelihood that we *can* make such a statement if called upon, can generalize significance in such a way that we might assert the film's values (however we may describe them) as our own, in our own lives, is one precondition of criticism. That is, as E.D. Hirsch points out, significance is always significance for *someone*.¹⁶ To find the theme of the work, the logic of values

(sociological, authorial, both) which may be said to "motivate" it, is therefore one way of asserting a relation of significance between mind and screen. It implies a cognitive discourse (we speak of the "argument" of *October*) and a cognitive subject (someone who "understands" that argument).

There are those, certainly, who would disallow validity or significance to thematic analysis, on the general grounds that analysis is a product of criticism rather than reading and effectively forecloses the work of the text by imposing an interpretation upon it. This attitude is frequently, though inconsistently, that of Roland Barthes. In certain contexts he allows a positive role to criticism for embodying or for replaying the "voices" of the text (*S/Z*, p. 15). And certainly through the course of *S/Z* Barthes fulfills in no uncertain terms the traditional role of the critic—assigning each signifier a signified within larger patterns of significance ("*Sarrasine, who was not devout, broke into laughter. * SEM. Impiety*" [*S/Z*, p. 155]) and in accord with an explicitly acknowledged and ideologically grounded methodology (his five codes). But at the same time Barthes clearly fears that the ultimate effect of criticism is to deny the "play" of the text and the reader by assigning the text a global, over-arching, uni-vocal interpretation.¹⁷ Thus in "From Work to Text" he talks of critics who "execute" texts, who "kill" them, by "the reduction of reading to a consumption" (*Image/Music/Text*, p. 163). In "Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers" he points to the school exercise of "*réduction de texte*" as a paradigm of the critical activity which substitutes a summary of the message of the text for the text itself. "The summary," he says, "is a disavowal of writing" (*ibid.*, p. 193). And in *S/Z* he reverts to Freudian terminology to suggest that the critical act of "tying up" the "threads" of the text is to castrate it: "Freud, considering the origin of weaving, saw it as the labor of a woman braiding her pubic hairs to form the absent penis. The text, in short, is a fetish; and to reduce it to the unity of meaning, by a deceptively univocal reading, is to cut the braid, to sketch the castrating gesture" (p. 160).

For Stephen Heath, on the other hand, this foreclosure is less a matter of castration than containment—but he sees it as having much the same effect. The reader-subject's search for a position of significance shuts down when the text recoups its excesses and makes narrative sense. The "play" of the text, which is predicated on the violation of expectation, is eliminated when the expectation of closure is fulfilled. Furthermore, the effect of narrative closure, as Heath has it, is to elide or efface the terms of narrative process (though not necessarily the fact of the process itself): narrative proceeds by contradiction but concludes in resolution, and effectively denies, under the rubric of "realism" or "representation," the "other scene" of its production. Thus "narration is

to be held on the narrated, the enunciation on the enounced," and the process of signification is eventually, ultimately subsumed by the process of the signified—all of which recalls in its vocabulary and logic the Daniel Dayan scenario of viewer perception (to which we will return).¹⁸

We must agree that criticism *can* be reductive after this manner. But it is clearly wrong to suggest, as Barthes does in *S/Z* and as Coward and Ellis suggest in *Language and Materialism*, that this is necessarily the case in conventional literary or film criticism.¹⁹ One criterion of validity in New Criticism has always been the ability of specific readings to enrich our experience of the text under analysis by bringing to consciousness an awareness of signification, connotation, and structuration. To be sure, critical articles of this sort often conclude with an attempt at characterizing the thematic component of the work in question, but such characterizations are exactly an attempt to deal with matters of value and ideology as those values arise from the hierarchical play of signifiers. In addition, thematic characterizations are always subject to verification or refutation at the hands of other critics and readers, and verification inevitably takes us back to the text. Indeed, one could readily assert that Anglo-American New Criticism had exactly the effect of calling the signification process into question, where previously it had been subsumed under a simple-minded notion of authorial intention or historical determinism. We need only point to the unprecedented productivity of New Criticism, and to the countless and often acrimonious debates within it, to support the contention. It will not do, then, to say that criticism, thematic or otherwise, cuts off the work of the text. Critical statements are always provisional in fact if not in their rhetoric, and the effect of such statements is generally to encourage textual play rather than deny it.

Furthermore, one can argue in reference to Barthes and Heath that aesthetic texts have the capacity to be something *more* than discourse. They have discursive qualities, certainly, and to attend to thematics is in part to attend to those qualities, but such texts are different from informative discourse in one crucial respect: they are repeatable. Exhaustability is a characteristic of informative texts. Once I learn the procedure for adjusting the valves on my VW bus I have no reason to re-read the appropriate section of *The Idiot's Guide to Volkswagen Repair*. To understand the meaning of the text in this case is to shut down my desire to play with its signifiers. Only if I have forgotten or misinterpreted the text will I feel the need to re-read it. Exhaustability may thus be correlated with utility or use-value.

Aesthetic texts, however, may have no use value in the same direct sense. We go to them primarily for their own sake and their use-value is more cultural than personal, is

more oblique than direct, is cumulative rather than immediate. Our *experience* of those texts may be direct, personal, and immediate. We may even learn something from them. But the use-value or truth-value of such texts is always "on hold." As fictions they are not necessarily subject to truth tests of the sort applicable to informative or historical discourse. And even when considered thematically there is no particular obligation for the reader or critic to endorse or approve the ideology of the work in question. If anything, it is precisely this lack of obligation, denying any pragmatic context requiring action or belief, which makes it possible for us to enter into the play and pleasure of the text.

Which is not necessarily to say that our experience of aesthetic objects is mere play or pastime. No doubt it can be, though I am not sure that such play amounts to the misuse of such subjects. But criticism differs from reading precisely to the extent that it seeks, among other things, to comprehend the range and character of the significance that such play may have for human beings. To talk of use-value (or the lack of it) is therefore to talk about a condition of reading. Aesthetic objects do not have use-value of the sort associated with informative discourse. Accordingly, they are not necessarily exhausted when they are understood, however much Barthes and Heath may be misled by their use of the "discourse" metaphor into believing that they are. I do not have to forget or misinterpret *Rio Bravo* to be eager to see it again. I may have other reasons for *not* wanting to see *Rio Bravo* next week, but the fact that I have seen it previously will be a minor consideration—and perhaps it is these people that Barthes has in mind when he speaks of criticism cutting off the play of the text. But in that case the objection is misdirected. Truly casual readers or viewers never read criticism. Criticism cannot affect them one way or the other. Those who do read criticism, on the other hand, are precisely those who are most likely to enter into the play of the text—by re-reading the text itself and by reading texts *about* the text.

Criticism, therefore, is a kind of textual play, a means of entering into relation with the text. The history of criticism, furthermore, teaches us the same lesson that we learned from considering the difference between informative and aesthetic discourse: aesthetic objects are simultaneously discursive and ritualistic. They embody value systems and ideologies which are in some sense signified by the texts and over which we may differ and debate. But aesthetic objects also entail a ritualistic, experiential component which allows us to renew our experience of them—both through repeated viewings (in the case of films) and through re-thinking those texts in criticism.

At which point we can see a very positive relation between reading and criticism. If we define "reading" as the moment-by-

moment perception of a text, a simultaneous "performance" and "re-performance" of it, we can see how such performances are of necessity inexhaustive (though not incomplete). Even with informative discourse the reading process is one which structures the flow of information into hierarchies which enable key or salient points to pass through short-term memory into long-term memory. Thus I will remember the procedure for adjusting the valves on my bus though I will not remember the exact words that were used to describe the procedure. And something similar can be said in regard to the reading of aesthetic texts. Hence the fact, as Metz points out in *Film Language*, that the most readily remembered aspect of a narrative film is its plot, something which we never "see" but which we rather abstract from the moment-to-moment flow of information; while the least memorable aspect of a film is precisely such specific details as its cutting and camera movement.²⁰ To a certain extent, then, the "transparency" of classical film-texts is less a matter of ideology *per se* than of information processing and memory retention. We quite literally cannot remember everything in a film and so will remember those aspects which are foregrounded (with foregrounding to be understood as a matter of style and hence of ideology) and which can be arranged into some hierarchy of salience. Reading, that is, works both horizontally, from image to image and sound to sound, and vertically, as it arranges those images and sounds into structures of pertinence. We therefore "retain" all and only such information as can be processed into some larger structure of significance.

Criticism, then, can be seen as a retrospective extension of the reading process itself which fulfills a double function. To begin with, it generates upper-level abstractions (e.g., "plot," "theme"). Thus in the case of Alfred Hitchcock I have suggested that his films may ultimately be understood as reflections upon the ethics of reading. The statement by itself is very abstract and might be thought reductive—and would be were it not for the fact that upper-level generalizations effectively stretch out and thus expand the framework of pertinences. The more abstract my characterization of the thematic of a given film, the greater the conceptual distance between my statement and the film in question, the greater the opportunity and responsibility I have for laying out the data of the film along the hierarchy of comprehension and recollection. Put another way, the more abstract my abstraction, the greater the detail which can be elucidated beneath it. Secondly, then, and as a consequence, the effect of thematic reading, at least in potential, is exactly the reverse of that foreseen by Barthes. Rather than close down the text, it opens the text up, brings it alive, if you will, by assigning significance to a far greater number of details, exactly as I have tried to do here in my discussion of Hitchcock's films. Subse-

quent experiences of the text or texts in question will thus be all the more ritualistic and celebratory as it becomes increasingly more possible for readers to observe the play of signifiers and signifieds.

Furthermore, this play of spectatorship, when seen in its ritualistic aspect, can readily be extended to include the perceptual circumstances obtaining between subject and screen. The traditional account of the mind/screen relationship in Hitchcock, however negatively framed by the metaphor of "voyeurism," was founded, correctly, I think, on the supposition that it is possible for directors to suggest analogies between the actions and circumstances of characters and the actions and circumstances of the members of the film audience (see the V. F. Perkins discussion of *Marnie* in *Film as Film*, for example).²¹ This is seldom a matter of absolute point-of-view identification of character and viewer over the entire length of a film. No matter how thoroughly the analogy is developed, it remains an analogy. Nevertheless, I would not want to take issue with the proposition that character/viewer analogies can be employed to lend a certain ethical/experiential resonance to the act of film-viewing. Where I have taken issue with traditional descriptions of the Hitchcock cinema I have done so for the purpose of offering a more accurate account of the films which should lead in turn to a more accurate description of the resonances which may obtain between subject and screen.

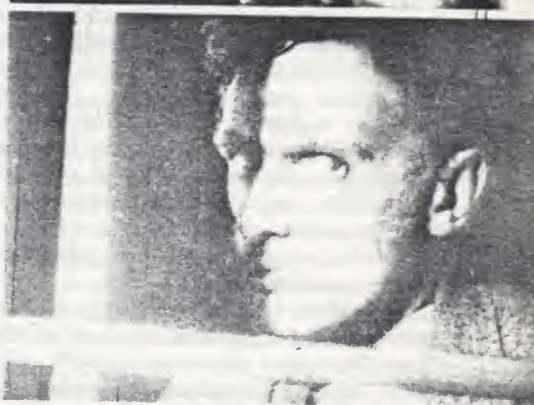
I have argued in general that Hitchcock's films are about the "ethics of reading." This is evidenced, I have suggested, at various levels of the text or texts in question. In narrative terms the plot actions of Hitchcock's films focus on characters who re-read the world, who mis-read the world, or who are themselves read or misread (see section III). At the level of iconography the reading issue manifests itself in symptomatic distortions or obstructions of sight—many of which see via subjective point-of-view sequences (see section IV). At the level of causality we come to understand how various actions (desertion, denial, detachment) and circumstances (physical, architectural, social, geographical) can lead to visual and moral distortion (see section V). And in terms of the logic of narrative resolution, we come to see how character alignment, embodied specifically by variations on the double figure, allows characters to put themselves and their world back together again (see section VI). By seeing themselves in their opposites they are enabled to "re-read" and hence to re-write their relationship to others and to the world: thus change replaces fixation, openness replaces isolation, vulnerability replaces paranoia, and sexuality replaces sterility.

I would suggest, then, that the reading theme, which serves to motivate the structural and iconographic logic of the majority of Hitchcock's films, can be said to imply a



viewer-subject position which ultimately encourages us to reflect upon the dynamics and ethics of our own process of reading. Negatively, Hitchcock allows us the freedom to read poorly. It is this possibility that the voyeurism metaphor perfectly captures. We can become fixed, isolated, paranoid, and sterile in our responses to Hitchcock's films and characters. To a certain degree the circumstances within which we view the films are reinforcing factors. There is a measure of fixity and paranoia implicit in the popular generic conventions which Hitchcock employs. If anything, Hitchcock's public persona encourages misreading. His walk-ons, his television shows, his various pulp publishing enterprises, and particularly his statements to interviewers: all seem positively calculated to throw our readings off track by prompting us to view the films as macabre entertainments. One might even suggest that Hitchcock's dedication to the notion of pure cinema and to the tradition of montage requires him to adopt this tactic: by cutting the world up into little pieces Hitchcock effectively challenges us to put it back together again.

Despite all of this, however, misreading in Hitchcock almost always involves a certain *willfulness*. We have already (and repeatedly) touched upon this in connection with characters, like the young girls on the beach in *Young and Innocent*, or Ann in *Strangers on a Train*, who attribute false and often sexually loaded motives to others. But we can cite here, as an emblem of willful misreading, the sequence in *The 39 Steps* when the crofter gets up from the dinner table and leaves the cottage. He has seen the exchange of glances between his wife and Hannay, he interprets it (we learn from the subsequent course of events) as evidence of infidelity, and he withdraws from the scene, taking up a position in the shadows outside the house such that he can



peer in at his wife and Hannay. The latter two are thus doubly "framed," graphically, by the glass and the window frame, and dramatically, by the crofter's self-servingly false expectations: it's the "rear window" syndrome all over again. The point to make here, however, is that the crofter *chooses* to take up the position and it is precisely this perverse willingness to be isolated and detached that the film calls into question.

It is thus *possible* to misread the films of Alfred Hitchcock. But it is neither necessary nor particularly appropriate. It is rather the case that the films themselves raise the reading issue very directly and ex-

stant, i.e., that the coordinates differ greatly depending upon whether one views the film in a theater or at home on television; and that the openness of the theater space is effectively closed down by the darkness necessary to projection, i.e., one could argue that darkness once again fixes us in an isolation like to that of the crofter in *The 39 Steps*.

The former objection is less crucial but more interesting because answering it helps to confirm the logic underlying what has heretofore been a fairly common subjective impression, i.e., that Hitchcock's films are somehow "better" when one sees them with an audience. There are valid theoretical grounds for asserting that a theatrical feature film retains its "theatricality," and by implication its "audience," regardless of the means of transmission. In this regard it is clear that the "subject position" is an implied feature of the text and is therefore as much a construct of a film's rhetoric as an implied narrator would be. We may construct our own subject position, of course, which may or may not correspond to any degree to that which is implicit in the rhetoric of the text (which is nothing more than to say that some viewers are better "readers" than others). But most texts "fictionalize" their audience in some demonstrable way and that fictionality, depending as it does upon some measure of reader co-operation, may very well remain relatively constant.²² That is, we can "imagine" ourselves as part of a film audience even if that audience does not exist for a particular performance of a specific text. Thus it is quite possible for us to watch *To Catch a Thief*, say, on television and still celebrate in some perceptual sense the sociality encouraged by the text: we don't need an audience to feel ourselves a part of one. Nevertheless, it remains true, I think, that the real presence of an audience lends an extra measure of sociality to the viewing experience, an extra resonance of circumstance and implication. We don't have to overcome the inertia of solitude when we view films with other people; and thus it is far easier to enter into the state of social wholeness and elation which Hitchcock's films invite.

The objection that the darkness of the theater re-institutes solitude by fixing our attention on the screen is closely related to the voyeurism model of the mind/screen relationship and suffers from the same insufficiency. Both assume that a relatively constant angle of view correlates rather directly with a restricted field of vision. This is plausible in the case of *Rear Window*, where Jefferies's field of vision is delimited by the tenement courtyard and the windows opposite his own, though even here, it seems to me, there are a good many things to look at, far more than one might expect of a typical city tenement. But *Rear Window* is quite atypical in this respect, belonging, as it does, with films like *Lifeboat*, *Rope*, and *The Wrong Man*,

which play particularly upon the dangers of fixation and enclosure. Most Hitchcock films, however, are nowhere near so limited or restricted in their field of vision, either socially or spatially. Particularly when seen as a group, Hitchcock's films evidence a surprising range of social settings despite the fact that his protagonists generally belong to the bourgeoisie or the upper middle classes. We see destitute lower class or working class characters or neighborhoods repeatedly (in *The Lodger*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The 39 Steps*, *Sabotage*, *Young and Innocent*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Strangers on a Train*, *The Wrong Man*, *Psycho*, *Marnie*, *Torn Curtain*, *Topaz*, *Frenzy*, and *Family Plot*). It's as if Hitchcock felt obliged to show us the whole of the social world, an obligation corresponding to the responsibility which his characters accept to see the world whole, to read themselves as part of the whole. Likewise, in spatial terms, Hitchcock's films typically cover a great deal of territory and a variety of locales. One minute we are in London, the next in Scotland; or we move from New York to Chicago to North Dakota. Thus, despite the fact that our literal vantage point remains constant, fixed in our theater seat—the fictive vantage point which we assume in attending to the films is precisely such that we do not become fixed. Or if we do it is something ominous and threatening, as is the case in *Rear Window* and *Psycho*. As we have seen, however, it is Hitchcock's tendency to urge his characters, for ultimately benevolent ends, out of their isolation, just as he urges us to leave the isolation of our everyday lives for the sociality of the Hitchcock cinema.

I concluded my thematic reading of the cinema of Alfred Hitchcock with a discussion of the double figure. We may conclude this discussion of spectator play on a like note. I have already touched upon the double notion in section VI, where I suggested that doubling in Hitchcock has less to do with guilt than with knowledge. In the present section, furthermore, I have specified that knowledge as the knowledge of a correlation which binds the act of reading, the assertion of positive human relationships, and the restoration of visual and moral order together as components of a single ethical or ideological gestalt. Implicit in this is a somewhat abstract yet powerfully resonant analogy between the actions of characters and the actions of viewers. We might be tempted, then, to suggest that viewers are ultimately to be seen as "doubles" of Hitchcock's protagonists. We must be careful here. This particular "double" notion is not very far removed, in certain respects, from the old voyeurism/identification model of the subject position; and, as we have seen, the identification metaphor tends to emphasize likeness at the expense of otherness.

We can avoid this error by switching metaphors for the moment. Rather than conceive of viewers as "doubles" of the

characters, or vice versa, we can see viewers and characters, as I suggested in section VI, as parts of a single continuum of actions and consequences. Thus we may be "like" characters, in that we are on the continuum, are implicated, as I suggested earlier, in their motives and movements; yet we are "other" than those characters for occupying a different point on the continuum, a difference which is defined primarily by degrees of knowledgeability.

It is often the Hitchcock case, for example, that we will know far more about the plot circumstances of a particular film than will many of most of the characters. On occasion Hitchcock will open a film by divulging a secret against which we read the rest of the movie, as is the case in *Sabotage*, *Young and Innocent*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Rope*, *Strangers on a Train*, *I Confess*, and *Family Plot*. More frequently we are let in on some essential secret, or some aspect of it, in advance of the central characters, though not necessarily in the film's opening sequence. We see this in *Notorious*, where we are aware that Alicia is being poisoned in advance of Alicia herself and Devlin, and in *Vertigo* as well, where we are made aware of Judy's masquerade as "Madeleine" far in advance of Scottie himself. This is also the case in *North by Northwest*, where we see the Professor long before Thornhill ever meets him, and where we are also made aware of Eve Kendall's ambiguous connection with Vandam before Thornhill learns of it. Likewise, we are clued into Marnie's neurosis long before Mark Rutland becomes aware of its full ramifications. *Frenzy*, too, fits this pattern, in that we are aware of Rusk's guilt far in advance of Blaney or Inspector Oxford. Equally common are plot sequences, often of the "misread man" variety, wherein our state of knowledge generally matches that of the focal character or characters. This is clearly the case in *The 39 Steps*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *To Catch a Thief*, *The Wrong Man* itself, and *Topaz*; and even in these films the state of our knowledge exceeds that of most characters, in that we understand that the wrong man is indeed innocent, or that the protagonists are correct to believe that a plot is afoot. Only in a select few films is our knowledge less than that of the protagonists—one thinks of *The Lodger*, *Suspicion*, and *Psycho* particularly—and even in these instances our ignorance does not equal that of most of the film's characters. We see enough of Drew in *The Lodger* to doubt the clues pointing to his guilt; in *Suspicion* we are almost as suspicious of Lina's perceptions as we are of Johnnie's motives; and in *Psycho* we know a good deal more about Norman Bates than any of those who investigate Marion Crane's disappearance, even if we do not know that he actually killed Marion while dressed in dime-store drag.

Furthermore, those viewers acquainted with the iconography of Alfred Hitchcock gain knowledge of another sort, a



knowledge which is generally unavailable to the characters themselves. Thus our first view of Devlin in *Notorious* focuses on the back of his head, on his facelessness, and it is only at film's end that he too comes to understand the degree of his own dehumanization. Likewise, in *To Catch a Thief* we see marvellous helicopter shots of Robie's car as it races along the cliffside roadway. Robie isn't in the car (his housekeeper is at the wheel—as *les flics* eventually discover); and even if he were at the controls he could not be seeing what we see, i.e., an alternating pattern of roadside towns, their houses hunched together on the mountain face, and bare stretches of roadway. But the contrast between isolation and congregation provides a context which calls Robie's mountain-top solitude into question. Similar observations on the interplay of iconography and character can be made regarding almost every shot in the cinema of Alfred Hitchcock. The point to make, in every case, is that Hitchcock's use of settings and symbols provides a background to the actions of his characters, a background the significance of which they often disregard or fail to take into account, yet it is a background which we can read for clues as to the nature of the problems they face.

In general, then, we can say that viewer knowledgeability is almost greater to some degree than that of the characters in the films. Two consequences follow from this. On the one hand it becomes that much more difficult to misread the films. One really has to work at it if he/she wants to misinterpret Hitchcock's movies. On the other hand, however, and here is where the continuum metaphor is particularly appropriate, the gap of knowledgeability separating the viewer from the characters can be said to imply a measure of humility on our own part rather than hybris. If our position on the continuum is, say, in the center, with that of the less-knowing characters on one side, who is to say that the continuum does not also extend in the opposite direction, such that we may be less knowing in our turn than some other person or character? All of which, I grant, is speculative—but it has the advantage of accounting for certain intuitive responses to Hitchcock's films, the simultaneous sense we get at film's end of elation (for having read well) and gratitude (for being able to read well).

In terms of the viewer/character analogy, then, the "double" notion is accurate but only within limits, limits which are determined by the fact that our state of

knowledge generally exceeds that of the characters in the films. Thinking of "the double" less as a figure than as a function, however, allows us to specify in somewhat more accurate terms the sense in which we as viewers may be said to encounter our double during the viewing experience. In discussing the interplay of doubles in section VI, I suggested that the double serves a catalytic function *vis à vis* its opposite. The double is a perspective device which encourages characters to re-read themselves and their world. In some cases this requires self-reflection. Thus characters will see some aspect of themselves reflected in the actions or circumstances of another character and will often, though not always explicitly, acknowledge that similarity by asserting some distinction between themselves and their opposites. In other cases self-reflection *per se* is less important than the adoption of a course of action running implicitly counter to that which the character had previously followed. In every case, however, the change is brought about by the intrusion of something new or foreign into the world, into the visual field, of the character or characters; and their subsequent actions represent an attempt to assimilate the implication of that new element into the ethical and visual patterns of their own lives and activities.

In order for the "double figure" to legitimately apply to or incorporate the viewer, then, we must shift our focus somewhat. What enters into our field of vision is not merely another character but rather the film itself. To draw analogies at the level of action and circumstances between viewers and characters is thus permissible and illuminating—because there *are* characters in the films who do take action and who take those actions within particular temporal and physical circumstances. But it is the whole package of those characters, actions, and circumstances which occupies our attention. In which case the ultimate double figure is not that of viewer and character alone but that of mind and screen, of the viewer and the viewed.²³ It is the definitive perceptual circumstance which neither criticism nor reading can avoid without ceasing altogether.

The point to make, in any case, whether we make it in thematic terms or experiential terms, is that the films of Alfred Hitchcock put us face to face with the screen, with the cinema, and therefore with our own "cinematic practice." The films are the catalysts which allow for the play of speculation—but ultimately *we* are responsible for how well and upon which terms we will read the films. Some viewing strategies will be more successful and more truly satisfying than others, for responding more thoroughly and positively to the possibilities provided by the films. I have tried to describe one such strategy here. But we are the ones who activate those possibilities within the range of our abilities to do so. Thus we are "like" the films in certain

respects—in terms of the character/viewer analogy, for example—but ultimately we are "other," and are responsible for the readings we undertake. Hitchcock can do no more than suggest that what we choose to see and how we choose to see it are matters of ethical consequence. But that he does so at all marks him as an artist of genuine distinction.

VIII. Conclusions

This essay hardly lacks for conclusions even to this point. I have offered alternative solutions to a variety of cruxes in Hitchcock criticism, for example; and I have also, particularly in section VII, taken issue with such as Roland Barthes who contends that the effect of criticism is generally to "kill" its objects. Aesthetic objects are not "killable" to begin with; their "life" does not depend on our ignorance but rather upon our willingness to attend to them. If anything, criticism is a higher form of attention which allows a far more intense and far more fruitful play of speculation that that enjoyed by naïve reader/viewers. Nevertheless, there are several debts of patience that need repayment and I feel obliged to discharge those debts in this final section.

More specifically, I suggested in section I that my discussion of Hitchcock's films would eventually call into question a certain tendency in film aesthetics which mistakenly equates specific, localized stylistic devices or conventions with far more general aesthetic and sociological consequences. In Bazin's case the stylistic device or figure is that of "analytical montage" and the effect is a denial of our freedom of reading and the anesthetization of our sensitivities to cinema and to the world at large. In the case of Daniel Dayan the device or convention is the shot/reverse shot (William Rothman rightly points out that Dayan is really talking about the point-of-view figure) and the effect is one which masks the ideological functioning of the film by implying that the film is or contains its own cause.²⁴ Our perception of any single shot raises the question of origin (who is taking this picture? who is ordering these images?) but the reverse shot "claims" this causality, or so goes the Dayan scenario, by occupying the space of the "absent one," i.e., of the camera. In Dayan's own words: "The absent-one is masked, replaced by a character, hence the real origin of the image—the conditions of its production represented by the absent-one—is replaced with a false origin and this false origin is situated inside the fiction. The cinematographic level fools the spectator by connecting him to the fictional level rather than to the filmic level" (p. 31).

The similarity of the two positions is remarkably self-evident: in both scenarios "the receptive freedom of the spectator," to use Dayan's phrase, "is reduced to a minimum" (p. 27) and the oppressive "tyranny" of the filmmaker (whether that "maker" is conceived of as an individual or as a class)

is correspondingly maximized. To be sure, Bazin and Dayan prescribe different remedies (Welles vs. Godard) and they obviously operate out of remarkably dissimilar frames of reference—but their descriptions of the “illness” and its effects are indistinguishable. In essence, both are attacking continuity cutting for denying the freedom of the spectator and they do so in fairly absolute terms, as if “entrapment” were an inevitable and unavoidable consequence of classical cinematic practice.

My discussion of Hitchcock allows for the possibility of entrapment. And no doubt those who choose to misread Hitchcock's films are unlikely to acknowledge the ideological or thematic implications of their readings. But it is not Hitchcock who entraps them, nor is it the classical narrative cinema. They trap themselves. Indeed, the fact of their entrapment argues the falsity of the Bazin/Dayan scenario. Only by leaving us free to read as we will does Hitchcock allow the possibility that we will read poorly. Buy by leaving us free. Hitchcock also establishes a cinematic circumstance which rewards reading well. Our “freedom” is not anesthetized in the least. Rather, it is put at hazard so that the act of reading carries genuine ethical consequence.

Of course, it is possible to agree with my reading of Alfred Hitchcock and with my description of this particular variety of mind/screen relationship without thereby discrediting the general accuracy of the Bazin/Dayan position. One need only deny that Hitchcock is typical of classical cinematic practice and by so doing one denies the general applicability of my findings. Yes, Hitchcock's films urge us to consider the ethics and practice of reading, but most films do not. I would myself agree in part with this position. Many Hollywood films are not overtly concerned with “reading” as I have used the concept here. Thus, if the ethical or aesthetic validity of a film depends upon the degree to which it calls the reading process directly into question, few films of any sort are likely to pass muster.

Yet I believe that my findings are defensible and are of general significance in the study of the classical narrative cinema. The “typicality” issue remains something of a weak link, I grant; but the weakness characterizes the arguments of Bazin and Dayan as well as my own. If anything, given the sweepingly inclusive nature of their charges, the burden of proof belongs to those who uphold the Bazin/Dayan position. Thus, while it is difficult to *prove* that Hitchcock is typical it is just as difficult to prove that he isn't—unless, of course, one begs the historical issue by defining typicality a priori in terms of “readability.”

Furthermore, Hitchcock clearly is typical to the extent that typicality really matters to Bazin and Dayan. Both of them, it must be noted, seldom if ever talk of films in arguing their theoretical cases. They talk rather of shots or sequences. That is, they talk in localized terms and with little if any

regard for context or function. Thus Hitchcock's films provide us with text book examples of “analytical montage” and Bazin's position, particularly in the Welles monograph and in his own essays on Hitchcock, leaves us little choice but to describe Hitchcock as a “tyrannical” director (hence the fact, perhaps, that Bazin to his credit, deleted the more vituperous and indefensible passages from the revised version of the Welles book).²⁵ By the same token, Hitchcock's films never show us the absent one (the camera), even if they do show us Hitchcock on occasion; and the shot/reverse shot and point-of-view figures in his films are indistinguishable from those described and condemned by Dayan—so once again we have little choice, within the terms of the argument presented to us, but to describe Hitchcock as typical of the Classical Narrative Cinema.

In which case, then, my own argument is sufficient refutation of the Bazin/Dayan line of reasoning—at least to the extent that the argument makes *absolute* claims about the *necessary* relationship between specific cinematic techniques and specific viewer responses. If it were absolutely true that analytical montage or shot/reverse shot or point of view sequences deny my freedom to see cinematic images as parts of filmic wholes and require me to accept without question or consideration the self-evidently natural truth of the ideology of the narrative, as if that narrative were not a product of ideological determination—then I could not have written this essay which is very much concerned with ideology and causality. If, on the other hand, Bazin and Dayan are not speaking in absolutes but only of the general tendencies of particular audiences at specific moments in history, then the question of mind/screen relations remains totally open. In which case we will have to continue doing our best to read each and every film as carefully as possible on the premise that we *can* evolve a discipline of film studies, a descriptive discipline which will provide the sort of knowledge necessary to the development of a valid film aesthetic and an accurate film history. We can only fail in these tasks if we continue jumping the scientific gun by putting our a priori cart so frequently before the evidentiary horse.

Fortunately, the discipline I have described exists to a large and important degree under the rubric of the auteur theory. It is demonstrable, I believe, that auteurism, more than any other theory of textual criticism, accords with the basic mental procedures—of connotation, hypothesis, and testing—by which we comprehend cinematic and aesthetic objects.²⁶ Thus it is far less likely than any other modes of criticism, and particularly of that suggested by the Dayan/Bazin scenario of spectator activity, to reduce the data of the text to some a priori model. The Bazin and Dayan positions both posit a macro-class of texts which is defined by a minimal number

of traits. The applicability of their results is therefore tenuous in the extreme. The auteurist approach reverses priorities, however, by positing a micro-class of texts defined by a maximum number of traits. The effect of auteurism is therefore exactly to increase our attentiveness rather than to decrease it. More important in the present context, however, is the fact that auteurism quite legitimately provides exactly that sense of causality which Dayan and Heath declare to be lacking.

Clearly the most questionable assumption in the Dayan scenario of spectator perception involves that moment when the reverse shot retroactively claims the causality of the preceding shot, thus answering the question “Who is ordering these images?” with the image of a character within the fiction—at which point the film becomes its own cause, becomes, therefore, reality. The obvious auteurist rejoinder, of course, is to answer that question with the name of the director—at which point the film's “reality” becomes primarily an effect of rhetoric rather than slight of hand. Neither answer to the causality question is absolutely necessary. It is difficult to imagine any spectator so naïve as to take cinematic images as literal reality. Indeed, it is logically demonstrable that the “reality effect” depends upon the spectator's concurrent knowledge, however subconscious, that the images are merely images. In a world full of instamatics it is far more likely that the answer to the “who?” question will always be “a man with a movie camera” (to paraphrase Dziga Vertov). But the next question—“Which man or woman?”—quite legitimately invites an auteurist answer: Alfred Hitchcock.

To give that answer is *not* to imply Hitchcock worked alone; nor is it in any way to deny the determining effects of history or ideology. It is a powerful acknowledgement, however, of the fact that films *are* made, are caused, and that they are not mere transcriptions of reality. Furthermore, to acknowledge causality (of any sort) encourages us to attend carefully to aesthetic relationships, both within and across shots—at which point the whole signifier/signified relationship is thrown into utmost relief: to perceive a teleology of the signifier automatically implies a corollary teleology of the signified—which the viewer “generates” in the process of reading. Therein lies the true realm of textual pleasure—in the act of “narrativity,” as Robert Scholes has termed it; and pleasure so perceived and experienced is unlikely to enslave or deaden our sensibilities.²⁷ New Criticism has long been aware of this; auteurism has known it intuitively if sporadically; and the work of structuralist and post-structuralist critics serves in the present context primarily to repeat and confirm (by negative example in some instances) the wisdom of this textually centered view of criticism, however much our post-structuralist colleagues might protest their disagreement.

FOOTNOTES

1. "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No. 223 (1970); rpt. in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 493-529; Stephen Heath, "Film and System: Terms of Analysis," *Screen*, 16, No. 1 (1975), pp. 7-77, and No. 2 (1975), pp. 91-113; and Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974). See also Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

2. See, for example, Nick Browne, "the Spectator-in-the-Text: The Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*," *Film Quarterly*, 29, No. 2 (1975-76), pp. 26-38, and "Narrative Point of View: The Rhetoric of *Au Hasard, Balthazar*," *Film Quarterly*, 31, No. 1 (1977), pp. 19-31.

3. André Bazin and Jean Cocteau, *Orson Welles* (Paris: Editions du Chavanne, 1950), p. 57; cited in J. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). See Andrew's note, p. 258, for a history of the revisions in Bazin's *Welles* Book. Also see Bazin's "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," in *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 23-40. William Cadbury's "The Cleavage Plane of André Bazin," *Journal of Modern Literature*, 3, No. 2 (1973), pp. 253-267, is essential reading.

4. See Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," *Film Quarterly*, 28, No. 1 (1974), pp. 22-31; and Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Film Quarterly*, 28, No. 2 (1974-75), pp. 39-47. Dayan cites Jean-Pierre Oudart's series of articles on "La Suture" in *Cahiers du Cinéma* (Numbers 211, 212, 222, and 232) as providing crucial underpinnings for his own case.

5. Donald Spoto, *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1976). See also Peter Wollen, "Hitchcock's Vision," *Cinema* (Cambridge), No. 3 (1969), pp. 2-4, and Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, 16, No. 3 (1975), pp. 6-18.

6. Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films*, 3rd ed. (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1977) and Raymond Durgan, *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1974).

7. On *Sabotage* see Leland A. Poague, "The Detective in Hitchcock's *Frenzy*: His Ancestors and Significance," *Journal of Popular Film*, 2, No. 1 (1973), pp. 47-59.

8. On *Notorious* see articles, identically titled "Alfred Hitchcock's *Notorious*," by David Bordwell, *Film Heritage*, 5, No. 3 (1969), pp. 6-10, 22, and by William Rothman, *Georgia Review*, 29, No. 4 (1975), pp. 884-927.

9. On *Spellbound* see Thomas Hyde, "The Moral Universe of Hitchcock's *Spellbound*," *Cinemonkey*, No. 15 (1978), pp. 30-34.

10. This "family film" notion is derived from Maurice Yacowar's discussion of *The Lady Vanishes* in *Hitchcock's British Films* (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, 1977).

11. Roger Greenspan points out the importance of couples in Hitchcock in "Plots and Patterns," *Film Comment*, 12, No. 3 (1976), pp. 20-22. And I am obviously in agreement with his basic assertion, that Hitchcock's is "one of the great normative visions in the history of world cinema. To an astounding degree, men and women still have the option of loving one another and living together in sanity—under the aegis of Alfred Hitchcock" (p. 20).

12. William Cadbury discusses the Freudian implications of this ability of Hitchcock characters to "turn against the shadow and move away" in "The Contribution of Depth Psychological and other Theoretical Resonances to Film Meaning," *Cinemonkey*, No. 17, (1979), pp. 38-44.

13. See my *Frenzy* paper (cited above) for an elaboration of some of these points.

14. On this metaphoric aspect of our "reading" of films see William Cadbury, "Human Experience and the Work Itself: A Review of Beardley's *Aesthetics* for Film Critics," *Journal of the University Film Association*, 29, No. 1 (1977), pp. 25-32.

15. On the relation of fictional specifics to thematic generalities see John M. Ellis, *The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

16. See E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). Hirsch's distinction between meaning and significance is a crucial one, though difficult to work out in terms of film. The point to make here, however, is that significance must be understood as a relation between text and context (p. 2).

17. Roland Barthes, *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 147.

18. Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," *Screen*, 17, No. 3 (1976), p. 90.

19. John Ellis and Rosalind Coward, *Language and Materialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977). Note: this John Ellis is not the one referred to in note 15 above.

20. Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 46.

21. V.F. Perkins, *Film as Film* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 151-154.

22. On the "fictionality" of the reader/viewer see Walter J. Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction," *PMLA*, 90, No. 1 (1975), pp. 9-21, and Robert T. Eberwein, "Spectator-Viewer," *Wide Angle*, 2, No. 2 (1978), pp. 4-9.

23. Support for this conception of the viewer/film relationship is provided by Jack Foley, who arrives, independently, at a similar conclusion in "Doubleness in Hitchcock: Seeing the Family Plot," *Bright Lights*, No. 7 (1978), pp. 15-28, 31.

24. William Rothman, "Against 'The System of the Suture,'" *Film Quarterly*, 29, No. 1 (1975), pp. 45-50; rpt. in Nichols, *Movies and Methods*.

25. Bazin, it should be noted, was never very comfortable with the unquestioning enthusiasm of "la jeune critique 'hitchcocko-hawksienne,'" and that discomfort, revealed in his essays on Hitchcock collected in *Le Cinéma de la Cruauté* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), clearly derived from the conviction that Hitchcock's style was typical of Hollywood. As he puts it at one point (my translation): "The continuity cutting ('découpage continu') of Hitchcock in fact restores classical *découpage*. Each time that we are struck by his efficiency, it is because he has succeeded, at the cost of overcoming a thousand difficulties, at using shot/reverse shot or the closeup where it would have been easy, as it is for everyone else, to employ some truly unusual shot. His moving camera *mise-en-scène* is nothing but a perpetual succession of re-centerings, and is completely unlike the fixed frame ('plan fixe') of Wyler or of Welles who succeeded in integrating countless moments of virtual montage into a single frame (pp. 133-134)."

26. On the matter of auteurism see William Cadbury, "Auteurism: Theory as against Policy," *Cinemonkey*, No. 16 (1979), pp. 35-40; Leland Poague, "Intentionality, Authorship, and Film Criticism," *Cinemonkey*, No. 16 (1979), pp. 41-43; and Leland Poague, "The Problem of Film Genre: A Mentalistic Approach," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 6, No. 2 (1978), pp. 152-161.

27. Robert Scholes, "Narration and Narrativity in Film," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 1, No. 2 (1976), pp. 283-296.

Notes

(Continued from page 4.)

binder; though so far, the chief difficulty I've encountered with the post-Godard vanguard has been staying awake. Yet I can't help noticing that I'm not alone in my indifference: that while the hard-core film audience has hardened into various flagellant cults ("Ozumania" was Pauline Kael's coinage, so far as I know never committed to print, for one such), avidly embracing cataleptic performances, paralytic camerawork, hypertropic shot lengths, and all the other "minimalist" punishments that the modern cinema inflicts so mercilessly, most of my moviegoing companions of the sixties (who used to go to movies, as I did, in eager excitement) have, one by one, dropped by the wayside, their choosing to stay at home not wholly attributable to hardening of the arteries or the problems of getting a babysitter.

Is it time, perhaps, for me to join them: to move on to one of those more rewarding careers—pushing dope, selling encyclopedias—for which some fifteen years of writing film criticism leave one so eminently qualified? The choice, in any case, grows more clear: either one resigns, or resigns oneself to a future increasingly made up of living in the past, to the likelihood that most of the films one will care about will be films one has already seen. Certainly, the movies' past is what the work of more and more film-makers seems to be about, whether it's that of a Martin Scorsese, crossbreeding *A Star is Born* with *City for Conquest* in New York, New York to show us (to mountain-out-of-molehill effect) the old movie formulas gone sour, or a Wim Wenders, adrift in the gorgeous disarray of *The American Friend's* post-Breathless hybrid of *The Big Sleep* and *Strangers on a Train*. Such films and others like them (and, to judge from reports, the work of Fassbinder, too, is a compendium of the stuff of old movies) ransack their medium's past, self-consciously trying to stitch together new movies out of old ones, demolishing (or, in the case of the pea-brained *Star Wars*, celebrating) those movie "myths" we never, in any case, believed in. To be sure, the fact that so many contemporary film-makers are able to live off what they scavenge from the past is testimony to just how rich a storehouse the movies have provided in their seventy-odd years of existence; and my own sense of being able to dwell contentedly in that, of being able to live from now on with only those movies already made, is further testimony of how much, in their brief lifetime, the movies have already given us. But it's also testimony of how quickly and closely the movies have come to resemble a burnt-out case, that the brightest prospect on their horizon seems to be the revisiting or rediscovery of past achievements: that so much of their promise seems to lie—with each passing year, one feels, more irretrievably—behind them. William S. Pechter



Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun*.

ROUGH TREATMENT (Poland). In *Man of Marble*, Andrzej Wajda attacked the political casuistry of his generation; here he looks in tight, tight close-up at the breakdown of a marriage. A prominent journalist's wife leaves him for another man—a rival in bed as well as in politics. This once-sophisticated, nomadic cuckold is reduced to drinking and self-pity; gradually, he is excluded from the spheres of decision and political influence in his paper (the Polish equivalent of finding your locks changed in a Sixth Avenue office). So emotionally emasculated does he become that in the divorce court he offers not one iota of resistance, turning on his heel to commit suicide in a *coup de théâtre* that does, at least for a few moments, turn the heads of people accustomed to minding their own business in a semi-totalitarian state.

MY BRILLIANT CAREER (Australia). In 1897 the lot of a young lady was cast in a severe mold, but Gill Armstrong's heroine (based on an autobiographical character in Miles Franklin's novel) revolts in a delightfully unorthodox manner, almost submitting to an arranged marriage before opting for an uneasy and probably impoverished career as a writer. "I'm so near loving you," she tells her fiancée-in-waiting, "But I'll destroy you, and I can't do that." Judy Davis is an insouciant actress, somehow recalling the young Julie Christie as she indulges in a prolonged pillow fight with her escort, or thumps the piano at a lavish ball in revenge for Harry's flirting with another woman. Ms. Armstrong is a talent to watch in the new Australian cinema, and her film does more for feminism than Greer and Millett can.

A SUMMER'S LOVE (Sweden). Mats Arehn is a director who does not shirk the hapless ending. His new film is drawn from a novel by the Czech author, Ivan Klima, about a respectable middle-aged married man who is infatuated, for no rhyme nor reason, with a young teenager, and proceeds to ruin his life on her behalf. The plot is scarcely original, but Arehn and Jonas

Cornell (who wrote the script, relocating the tale in modern Sweden) analyze the destruction of this man with horrible verisimilitude. The battle of *The Silence*, between rational thought and corporeal desire, is waged all over again. The scenes with the man's wife and children and the interludes with the selfish, cynical mistress (a dead ringer for Mildred in Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*) have a sense of life going out of control, spiralling towards disaster. "I hate your idiotic, devoted love," sneers Eva, as though love were a disease. One leaves this oneiric, troubling film almost believing that it is.

JUN (Japan). A first feature film by Hiroto Yokoyama, this was among the few experimental works in a year when experiment was unfashionable. It describes a week in the life of a 20-year-old youth named Jun, working in a small factory in Tokyo. He is torn between his puppy love towards the demure Yoko, and a sexual desire so intense that it compels him to feel up women on the crowded commuter trains that take him to and from his job. The collision between romance and lust is not so interesting as the elliptical style adopted by Yokoyama, pinpointing the most intense moments of each day in a style that owes something to Resnais and the early Hani. Visually, *Jun* is a treat, and in five years Yokoyama may produce a really major work.

NEXT-OF-KIN (Norway). Anja Breien's *Wives* had a brief run in Portland and deserved more than the backhanded compliment of being a woman's version of *Husbands* (even though Breien herself made the comparison). *Next-of-Kin* quintessentially Norwegian, and specifically Ibsen-ish, in its chronicle of a family's quarrels following the death of a wealthy businessman whose will provokes long-concealed jealousies and betrayals. Though predominantly dark in texture, the film has a lighter pattern running through it, too, and one of the best sequences shows the relatives removing heirlooms from the family villa to the strains of Rossini's "Thieving Magpie."

It is acted with brio, and notable among the cast is Anita Björk, Sjöberg's "Miss Julie" of almost thirty years ago.

WOMAN IN A TWILIGHT GARDEN (Belgium). André Delvaux's Flemish films have hovered between fantasy and reality. But the war in Belgium was a time when fantasy became a *part* of reality, so that this film, about a woman traduced by both husband and lover, proceeds in a logical skein from start to finish. Nobody is quite what he appears to be: the husband, patriotic to a fault, collaborates with the Nazis; the lover, a Resistance fighter, becomes an informer after the war is over; the woman herself (Marie-Christine Barrault) reveals reserves of emotional strength. For too long the Low Countries have pretended that during World War II everyone in their midst was a hero. Delvaux's film describes, with compassion rather than condescension, the shadow-line between cowardice and courage.

THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN (West Germany). Fassbinder's prolific career continues in full spate. Of three new films on view in Cannes, this is his most accessible, and is the first Fassbinder to attract large audiences in Germany. Significantly, it is only the second picture he has made from somebody else's screenplay (the other was *Despair*). There is a pungent clarity to the story of Maria Braun, a woman so certain of her love for her husband, long vanished into the ruins of war, that she is able to build an entirely new life around herself and yet still not reject her true partner when, unexpectedly, he pops up again. The film is an outright homage to Douglas Sirk, and melodrama bathes both music and imagery. Fassbinder's greatest *forte* is the ironic gesture in the face of defeat, and Hanna Schygulla, terming herself "the Mata-Hari of the Wirtschaftswunder," swaggers through postwar Germany with a trooper's guile and guts.

DISPATCHES FROM OCCUPIED HOLLYWOOD

By Jeff Godsil

SARRIS AT FILMEX

On March 23, as part of the Los Angeles Film Exposition's (Filmex) delicately titled "Mis-appreciated American Films" series, Andrew Sarris arrived with his selection, the 1943 Ernst Lubitsch classic, *Heaven Can Wait*. By his very choice of film, Sarris once again championed the necessity for rediscovering the American cinema and proved to be the most eloquent spokesman for the cause. Not only was *Heaven Can Wait* the best film in the series, it was also the oldest, beating its closest competitor by over a decade. Most presenters in the series (all national critics) chose to remain in the seven-

ties.

A weak show of hands among the audience indicated a general unfamiliarity with the film and even Lubitsch in general. Sarris chose not to do much preliminary briefing, seemingly assured that the film could speak for itself. "Initially, I like to keep myself separate from the movie. It's up here and I'm over there." "Over there" was a few rows back, where Sarris joined once again in an audience's discovery of an American classic.

A beautiful 35mm Technicolor print unspooled, even better than one I had seen at a revival house a year ago. The audience seemed quite captivated by this exquisitely mounted studio film and its two stars: Don Ameche and Gene Tierney.

Sarris says that *Heaven Can Wait* offers Ameche the one role that justifies his career, the one that he was preparing for all his life. Although his acting is far from astonishing, he glides through the role so smoothly it's hard to find fault. There are seldom minor moments of nuance or expression that stand out, but perhaps Ameche was never that kind of actor. All the better for *Heaven Can Wait*. Despite his buildup in the film as an impetuous playboy, our introduction to Ameche's character establishes him as rather calm and reserved, which he remains. He may do outrageous things in the name of romance, but they will be done with assurance and dignity. Then we recall that this entire life story is the melancholy post-mortem recollection of a man awaiting his own presumably inevitable entry through the gates of Hell. It seems clear that to Lubitsch, it is precisely these qualities of grace and dignity that ultimately make him ineligible for entry. (These qualities are not shared by an intruding horse-faced society dame who has the impudence to expose her legs, offending the Devil himself, thus assuring her an instant and fiery doom.) Lubitsch guides Ameche through this reflective recapitulation as if it is truly the last testament of an aging *bon vivant*. There are moments of great pathos and poignancy derived from this guidance, and they belong to Lubitsch, another example of emotional power being conveyed through actors rather than by them.

Gene Tierney, on the other hand, must be given credit for moments all her own. She breaks down in tears during her first intimate encounter with Ameche and in tearful spasms draws back her ruby lips over her slightly buck teeth and even sticks her tongue out awkwardly at the pronunciation of a "th." Very real and very human, this statuesque ex-model so at home in upper-class roles, yet so capable of projecting vulnerability and warmth. I love her.

Sarris commented on her limited capacity as a complete actress, but acknowledged her ability to always be more than a mere clothes horse. The far side of paradise, maybe. Does it really come down to those teeth? On a big screen, you realize they

form more than a slight overbite. They give her a kind of constant pout. Those amazing cheekbones add to a "pinched" quality that belies her sensuality. (These seemingly contradictory qualities are perfectly utilized in *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*.)

In *Heaven Can Wait*, Tierney leaves Ameche after ten years of marriage. Ten years of which we have not seen one day. Ameche's narration describing the years as being happy ones are all that we are given, and we accept it. We have seen her only (outside of an earlier meeting in a bookstore) during their comically whirlwind courtship—consisting of his stealing her from his own brother.

It is a truly audacious thing for Lubitsch to jump directly to Tierney coming back to her parents' home in Kansas, too tired (and knowing it's useless) to explain to them why. We don't even know why, really. But we accept it. Or at least I do, romantic fool that I am. Women can do strange and mysterious things and all too often have reasons for their actions that baffle and mystify those around them. Maybe even themselves, sometimes. But they are also often proven correct. So we accept it. Just as in *Heaven Can Wait*, we accept the great need for this husband to be reunited with this beautiful wife and loving mother. And so the trek to Kansas. As Ameche and grandfather Charles Coburn peek through the living room window at the assemblage within, Ameche's eyes light on Tierney sitting quietly in a chair trying (without much luck) to begin reading an absurdly lengthy book. His face brightens. The search may have ended but this is not a look of victory. How could it be? It is a look of love.

And so he attempts to win her back. And reasonably well, we suppose. "It won't work," she keeps saying. It takes the grandfather's intervention (Coburn is delightful) and we are glad of the outcome. It's a shaky reunion at best, but holds promise, certainly more promise than is offered in the brother's failed attempt at a second courtship. "Marriage is not a roller-coaster ride, but a union between two right-thinking people," he says.

Heaven Can Wait is a marital comedy and a rare one at that. It is not screwball (like *The Awful Truth*) and it is not heavy-handed (like *Made For Each Other*). If you're Ernst Lubitsch, you can pull it off with a sincere love and respect for romance. As Lubitsch has proven many times, marriage and romance are *not* contradictory. Nor are they synonymous. They each just make the other more interesting, variations on each other's themes. The true nature of love remains elusive, but only those who give it a shot have a chance at coming close to their own definition. Through the pursuit itself, and the never-swavering dedication/obsession to the ideals of romance, one may find oneself bathed in the glorious glow of emotion. And if not, well at least you'll have memories of the pursuit, mem-

ories grander, perhaps, than reality.

Heaven Can Wait is a deceptively simple film, so delicately balanced by its own time that it could not be made today. There is no one today who approaches Lubitsch's sensibilities. It was his last great film, even getting nominated for the big "O," despite some critical opinions of the day that Lubitsch was in decline. It is so easy to talk of the careers of directors like Renoir as embodying "rivers of expression," but this phrase is apt for any great artist. Surely Lubitsch qualifies with his continuous expression of continental sophistication (style) and preoccupation with romanticism (content). Of course, Andrew Sarris has been telling us that for years.

After the Filmex screening Sarris once again addressed the audience. Many had left following the film (it was pushing the dinner hour), leaving the usual quota of pushy film buffs with questions they already know the answers to, and a contingent of aging star-gazers who had just met Don Ameche in some retirement home in Palisades Park ("and he's just as handsome as ever"). Sarris handled them all well, never straying from the enthusiasm he naturally holds for Lubitsch, yet understanding the delicate task of conveying it.

Sample question: "How would you compare Lubitsch with John Ford?"

After a long silent attempt at formulating a response that would have any meaning: "Like apples and oranges. Ford: more robust, broad, possible more profound in a grand sense. Lubitsch: more witty, worldly, subtle. Really, working in different genres."

A statement from a woman: "What a wonderful director he was. I once met him, and we discussed his film *The Snake Pit*."

No, dear. That was Anatole Litvak. Sarris even honored the mistake enough to attempt a comparison between Lubitsch and Litvak.

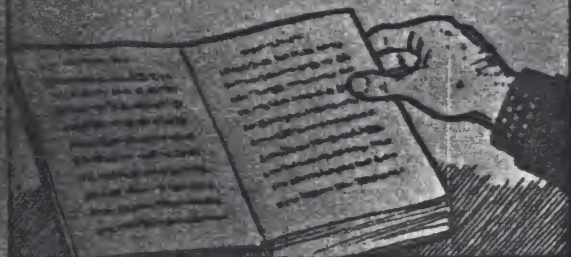
Charming and occasionally fey ("Hes gay, right?" asks a friend wrongly), Sarris kept a cocktail party atmosphere and encouraged feedback. He even did a stunning imitation of a crippling intellectual film student who once approached him after a screening of the film *Synanon*. Sarris had commented that it was better than he had expected. The student sputtered out incredulously, "You mean you have preconceptions before seeing a film?" Sarris chuckled, "Who, me? Marlon Brando or the Three Stooges, it's all film."

Sarris noted that his endurance is not what it used to be, but he can still see three or four films in a day, provided that they are not of the current "Give 'em everything we got" variety (*Star Wars*, *Hair*, et cetera). He also mentioned the lack of true character actors today. It is clear that Sarris's intent in keeping cinema's history visible is based more on maintaining an understanding and appreciation of vanishing classical styles of art than in vain attempts at learning how to duplicate them.

The Innocuous

A graphic review of
Luchino Visconti's *The Innocent*

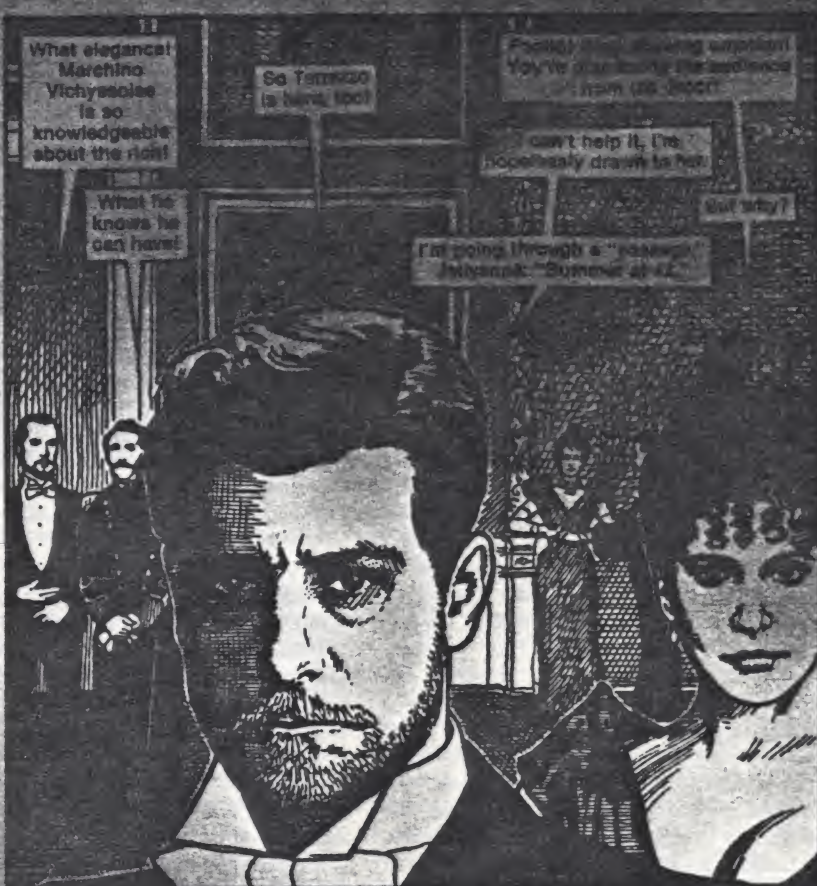
Written by Douglas Holm—Illustrated by Carl Bennett



I want you so much I could eat you up!

Why? Because of my toothy beauty?

No, because you remind me of the pun
Stanley Kauffmann made—Jennifer O'Connell!







Reviews

Apocalypse Now

What does *Apocalypse Now* mean—the film as we have it, considering the minimal difference between the 35mm version with the title sequence and the 70mm version without, but ignoring all the pre-release stories and versions, preliminary scripts, and encrusted commentary? Perhaps a guiding thread might be a question of comparison. Consider this description: We are taken into the soul of a strong leader of a semi-military, semi-familial band of peasant foreigners who are engaged in a project purported to be alien from the American national purpose, but which is entirely congruent with it, and we watch that finally empty soul passed on to its natural inheritor, a son worth of his inheritance but left virtually catatonic by it, bereft of its illusions of morality. *The Godfather*? Yes, but *Apocalypse Now* too, in many ways.

But while Marlon Brando is both Vito and Kurtz, Willard is not Michael Corleone. Michael becomes and embodies the moral darkness we just barely perceive in the Brando/Vito who plays at horror, stuffing an orange-skin under his lip, at peace outdoors among his tomatoes. Willard leaves the moral darkness with the Brando/Kurtz who plays out horror, stuffing a pomegranate-skin under his lip indoors among his severed heads. Yet it takes the whole film to realize the difference, and from the beginning Willard's identity with Kurtz is suggested: Willard on his bed at first snatches a buzzing fly, and Kurtz near the end does too, as he squats on the floor (as Willard had squatted in a ritual with cups which prefigured Kurtz's ritual bowl). The whole film seems, like that instance, to lead toward what was presented from the start: "This is the end," sing The Doors at the beginning, and on "the end" the jungle in Willard's dream explodes in flames, while at the end (in the title sequence which is in the codes of a beginning) a flare drifts down

and the jungle explodes again. And Willard has the scar at the beginning which, illogically, we see him get during the film's course.

Willard's confrontation with Kurtz will seem then to be a fulfillment of what was latent from the start. In Willard's dream, his face shares the screen with the idol at Kurtz's camp which looks like Kurtz and which Willard cannot literally then have known. His face is upside down across the screen from it, and Willard's image comes upright as he wakes. But Willard will be turned completely over—and his image too—by Kurtz's "children" who make him ready for Kurtz by revolving him in the mud and starting the change in his appearance toward Kurtz's. This change will culminate in the film's last image (except for the title sequence), in which Willard's face, this time right side up, emerges from and then returns to merge with the idol from which he had been separate at the beginning.

Willard's course of "becoming the idol" follows and parallels Kurtz's. Kurtz, like Willard, learned on a "first tour" in Vietnam about the "necessity" (as Kurtz puts it) of making horror one's friend, about the grotesque absurdity (Willard's image) of cutting someone in half with a machine gun and offering them a Band-Aid, and about its alternative (Kurtz's image) exemplified by the "will" involved in the enemy's cutting off the American-innoculated arms of little school-children, a will "perfect, genuine, complete, crystalline, pure," a will which bespeaks "strength." Both Willard and Kurtz, responding to the lessons of a war conducted like this one, abominate "lies," and they set against those lies the logic of the snail on the straight razor, a logic which refutes the "nabobs" of hypocrisy and accepts that "we must incinerate (the enemy), pig after pig, cow after cow, village after village, army after army"—we must have "the strength to do that," despite "the horror, the horror."

The film's structure of suspense, then, puts a question: Will Willard kill Kurtz as his General requires, and hence avow, for all its faults, the Band-Aid world, the world of what men who are as obviously insane themselves as are the General (played, not accidentally, by G.D. Spradlin, the man who played the Senator in *The Godfather*) and the CIA man think of as "decent restraint, . . . acceptable human conduct"? Or will he join Kurtz and avow the "strength," the "horror" which like Kurtz he has seen? Kurtz follows the logic of the snail to its expression in his Cambodian stronghold. Willard follows the logic to Kurtz, at whose camp he sees not crystalline purity, nor even the "unsound methods" which the General deplored (Willard says "I don't see any method at all"), but an obsessive, death-haunted, fruitless, indrawn, mystical garbage dump. The "photo-journalist" may "wish I had the words" to express the directness, so un-

available to him, with which Kurtz "meant it" when he told him he would kill him, but Willard, who can be direct too, need be less impressed. That he can understand and reject Kurtz, though at the cost of taking on the guilt of doing so, is what distinguished Willard from Michael Corleone.

There are two reasons why Willard is able to reject that aspect of identification with Kurtz which would mean joining him. The first is that he has an object lesson in his predecessor, Captain Colby. In the letter scrawled to his wife, Colby had written "I'm never coming home," but then had scratched out "home" and written "back" instead. One of Willard's most telling remarks is that "I had been home, and I knew it didn't exist any more." Moreover, in the beginning when trying to stay "strong" in his hotel room Willard continues his bowl ritual with a martial arts exercise in which he shatters a mirror and stares agonizedly at his bloody right hand. At Kurtz's camp he comes upon Colby, his fellow Captain and shattered image, holding a scalp-bedecked rifle with a similarly bloody right hand.

We think "Willard has found himself," but similarity is not identity. After the mirror-shattering, Willard throws his head back in a silent scream; when Kurtz drops in his lap the severed head (not of a race-horse this time, but) of Chef, a head which has the iconography of Our Lord in His agony, Willard's head goes back in the same way as before, but this time he screams "Oh Christ," a change and perhaps even a context marking his ability to break free from the identification with Colby and with Kurtz, to change, to work it through. Rather than a prefigurement of Willard's end, Colby provides a reason not to join Kurtz in the death-worship to which obsession with "strength" brings one, as it brought Michael Corleone.

But we could still ask *why* Willard is able to resist becoming Colby. The answer is the second reason Willard can avoid joining Kurtz. Willard comes to Kurtz, after all, only after the rest of the film, after that trip up river with the American-microcosm, Fuller-war-movie-like crew who may be inadequate to the challenges of the river but of whom, as much as of Colby, Willard is the inheritor. Willard is not alone on this mission (as he annoyedly remarks at its start), and what the Americans with whom he travels provide—the vulnerable openness of Lance, the innocent exuberance of Clean, the gentle culture of Chef, the dutiful rationality of Chief—becomes, in the aggregate, a defense against Kurtz, the reason not to think that Willard or we must make our choice between the apparent alternatives of Band-Aids and horror. The film is structured with classical rigor (amazingly, given its history), detached episodes interspersed with gradually illuminating reveries on Kurtz by Willard, and each episode, focussed on, and from the point of view of, one of the members of the crew (in



Apocalypse Now: Martin Sheen.

an order which is itself significant), while it demonstrates what kind of disaster can come out of the aspect of the American character for which the crew member stands, and hence seems to eliminate that aspect as a viable alternative to Kurtz, at the same time gives us (and Willard) an image for what *value* ought not to be so disastrously lost. The values are established here which, no matter what we make of America after Vietnam—and I don't think Coppola is obligated to predict what Willard and Lance will manage—decisively refute the moral which all too many Americans seem ready to draw from that war. Kurtz's moral: "If I had ten divisions of men like [the ones who hacked off the children's arms], then our troubles here would be over very quickly." If we had allowed ourselves Kurtz's logic, we would have become like Kurtz, like Michael Corleone.

After accepting from Jerry the cigarette he had refused at the beginning of the lunch scene (as throughout he refused food) and hence assenting to his mission on behalf of the "program," Willard starts to see with astonishment what the program means by "tolerable human conduct." Lance focuses us in the Kilgore episode, accepting the grotesque inadequacy of emotional affect with which "Big Duke 6" treats the destruction of a peaceful village (to Wagner, in an echo of Sam Fuller's equation of Wagner with Nazism in *Verboten*) in terms of a glamorous cavalry, giggling beach party, and surfing. Lance has a kind of innocence which can go along with it, find the attack "exciting", and urge that they wait for the tide for better surfing: this receptivity will get Lance through, but Willard is amazed at the folly of it, the wasted energy and lack of prudence, to observe which brings him closer to Kurtz.

Lance is lost by being opened up: Chef is lost by being closed down. With Willard, looking for mangoes in an outsized glowing

forest, Chef explains how his repugnance at the ruin of good food brought him here. There is a strain in the American character which New Orleans and its culture connotes, an innocent pleasure in the sense of good senses, which Chef comes touchingly to represent, not effete or Europeanized or even middle class, but gentle and moral—and utterly repulsed by Vietnam. The tiger attacks, and Chef responds as much to what it stands for as to what it is, to its complete alienation from himself and his purposes: "I didn't get out of the goddamn eighth grade for this kind of shit. All I want to do is fuckin' cook." The only rule for him from here is "never get off the fuckin' boat." It is a refusal of Vietnam, the opposite of Lance's acceptance, and Chef sticks with it—he has to be commanded to get off to search the sampan (which yields more proof he was right), and he urges Willard back to the boat at Kurtz's, where finally and tragically even the boat is no refuge. A surrogate for home; for Willard it too ceases to exist.

The major episodes alternate between spectaculars and dramas in the quiet jungle. Clean's episode, a super-spectacle, is next, what he rightly describes as "sho' nuff a bizarre sight in the middle of *this* shit." The metaphor of Vietnam misconstrued as a Western movie, begun in the Kilgore episode, is continued and deepened in the Bunny episode, in which a Playmate of the Year, dressed as a cowgirl and shooting and then thrusting her hot pistols between her legs ("grease my gun" cries a soldier) is flanked by two plain Playmates, one dressed as cavalry and the other as Indian. Willard observes with a less apprehensive disdain than he had shown for Kilgore's frivolity—he could have been *killed* on the beach, and indeed must receive there the slight cheek wound covered so obtrusively by a large Band-Aid (echoing Michael's bandaged nose) through the next scenes—as

the war is read as cowboys and Indians, but the point is, of course, mostly sexual. The pistol dance and the lewd shouts of the soldiers ("ride my spurs" to the cavalry Playmate, "suck on my peace pipe" to the Indian one) imply the sexual connotations of the Western myth itself, as the Kilgore episode revealed the oddly fascistic elements of the surfer imagery.

But what is most telling here is the way this trivialization of sex itself, this absorption of it into the war program, is all that the enthusiastic and charming Clean will ever experience. As we learn later when Chef twits him about it ("Cherry boy!") Clean is a virgin at his 17 years. He enthusiastically haggles with the venal supply sergeant for the Playmate poster he later displays prominently on the boat, and after the show he is ecstatic to Chef about having seen the girls, as he never could have managed in the Bronx. He blows kisses with abandon (the only one of the crew to get close-ups), calls to the girl to "sign my centerfold" (a Playmate does sign one, but not his), and the recollection of his enthusiasm is unbearable when, after he dies, Chef and Chief mourn over his body while his mother's voice on a mail-tape, intimate and ironic and everything a mother's voice should be, speaks of the wife and children he will never have: "It has always been my dream to have more than one child, but then again I got one good one, and so I'm hoping that pretty soon, not too soon but pretty soon, I'll have a lot of grandchildren to love and spoil, and then when your wife gets 'em back she'll be mad at me, ha ha." Vietnam transforms the surfer Lance into a zombie, but with Clean it destroys a generation.

Willard reflects on the Bunny episode, Kurtz-fashion, that Charlie's idea of R&R was cold rice and rat meat, that our four-star clowns will give the circus away with this absurdity, but the next (and final) episode of these which articulate the characters of the crew exposes not the trivialization of the American plan of "decent restraint" and its lunatic intersections with reality, but the impossibility of the plan's restraints actually governing human conduct. This episode is Chief's, the proof of his inevitable failure to control by "the book" the forces pandemic on the river. Chief begins to be emphasized after the Bunnies: his dignity contrasts with Lazzaro's foolishness in mooning the boat. To Willard's complaint about Clean's drumming (visually) on his head while Willard reads about Kurtz, Chief responds that maybe Clean feels that Willard busts *his* balls, feeling the same way himself. Right before the sampan episode he berates Chef for mocking Clean, for smoking dope, for wearing a scuzzy Army shirt (oddly, since Chef is shirtless at the time)—"you are a sailor." Against Willard's suggestion to "forget routine," then, he insists on checking the sampan since duty requires it, and we watch him in emphasized close-ups (like

the others in their episodes) as he tries and fails to control the men in the massacre—Clean, the wildest, who fires first, and then is disturbed, lifting and dropping the concealing shades when all is over; Lance who is morally outraged for the only time—"you had no right!"—and who sublimates at once with his compensatory and regressive attachment to the rescued puppy; and Chef, whose revulsion at getting off the boat and at disturbing the vegetables and fruit that are so important to his values, sets up the tensions released in the massacre and who despairs at it, defeated by Vietnam: "Let's kill all of the assholes, you can shit on all of them, *why not*" (weeping)!

The unspeakable spasm over, Chief intends to take the wounded woman to "friendlies" because "the book says, Captain, that . . ." but Willard, the film now becoming his and he becoming Kurtz, simply shoots her dead, and the scene closes on a fade of Willard's hunched body at the bow, an oval lens flare over his torso, his heart, as the screen goes to black. The exposition ends, and the screen is dark for a long while (some theatres have an intermission here), after this inability of Chief, the most decent, serious, and dutiful of men, to give order by "the book," to make "decent restraint" be anything but a mockery. Willard's murder of the young woman proves him to have gone over to Kurtz's logic—he has just read in one of Kurtz's letters about what he has practiced here, the necessity for "moments of ruthless action, called ruthless, but only clarity, seeing clearly what there is to be done, and doing it, directly, clearly, looking at it." The values of Lance's vigor, Chef's sweetness of culture, Clean's innocence, and Chief's moral rigor have been clearly established, but shown (by Kilgore, the tiger, the Bunnies, and the frenzy of the moment at the sampan) not to be availing. The bearers of those values will themselves be destroyed, but that the Kurtz alternative, apparently urged by what we have seen, is no better, will be shown.

Lance presides over the proof: the film's style, progressively more fantastic, is only assigned directly to Lance in the episode of the Do Lung bridge when sights and sounds reflect the fact the Lance has taken LSD, but it continues and deepens that vein, and in the episodes to come Lance is a guide overseeing Willard's progress. Like an extension of Kilgore, Lance is unscathed at the bridge, but his attention is not for surfing's sake, but for the sheer *beauty* of the display of a war where "there's no fucking C.O.," but only catatonics like Roach and sad frenzied maniacs like the soldiers who scream "take me home" to the passing boat. Chief tries to reassert rationality: "Don't make no sense" to travel beyond this "asshole of the world" where the bridge is nightly rebuilt to be nightly destroyed. But Willard can command him on, here beyond reason and "the book," and Lance presides, his tutelary



Apocalypse Now: Marlon Brando and Francis Ford Coppola.

genius. Lance's "purple haze," his "rainbow reality" smoke grenades, dominate the reading of the mail which makes explicit the equation between the trip we are seeing and the change of the America, the "home," it is supposed to be for, but that no longer exists. Reading the mail, Lance responds to a letter that a better place than Disneyland exists here in Vietnam; Clean thinks, from the evidence of his friend shot robbing a store in New York, that Vietnam is safer; Chef thinks Charles Manson's orders of slaughter as protest are "weird", as he will think Kurtz's orders similar. For all of this Lance's smoke grenades set the scene.

But Lance's delight in the sensations of the Disneyland world beyond all restraint is short-lived, as the world reveals its darker side and Lance retreats into protective acceptance of whatever the world offers: "camouflage," he had called it before the sampan when his initial huge sun-reflectors had shrunk to the tiny signal mirror by which he painted his face like a savage. His puppy had been a link with home and childhood on the Do Lung bridge, but when Clean is killed the puppy is lost. Chief weeps over Clean's body, for the loss of all the war had promised—he had looked at his own hand, stained with Clean's blood, in a guilt and rejection quite the opposite of Willard's inspection of his hand after his martial arts episode—but Lance sits painted in the bow (while the boat moves through fog, as always right to left) and gives unearthly moans and yells to match those of the unseen natives beyond, whose totems and piles of corpses are glimpsed through the fog like the broken body of the downed plane, also totem and corpse, beneath which the boat passes.

The fog clears, and Lance is delighted with the Disneyland aspect of the natives' arrow attack, fashioning an arrow-through-the-head joke and ignoring the danger while Willard tries to keep Chief

from responding to the attack. But Chief breaks down, this time in moral indignation after his breakdown in grief: Willard claims "They're just trying to scare us," but Chief knows better—"you got us in these waters. You got us in this mess and now you can't get us out." Like Chef on the sampan he screams "Let's fight fire with fire," shooting at the shore—but on the sampan there was no danger, though the crew thought there was, and here there is danger though Willard at least thinks there isn't. Chief, the American black whose vision of himself is that he has been brought from the jungle by white men to a civilization which should be characterized by his own restraint and reasoned dignity, knows that these white men have betrayed their promise, and have brought themselves and him with them back to "these waters, this mess." They don't even know the dangers. But he knows. The spear transfixes him: "spear," he says numbly in a terrible recognition of this final return of everything his character has rejected, and it is the film's best moment, to my mind, when dying Chief strangles Willard, trying to pull Willard down breast to breast to be pierced and killed by the spear sticking from his own chest. It is just what these white men deserve for their regressive fascination with violence and the savage. In an immediately pre-release version (if we may be forgiven for one instance) Chef sums it up, perhaps so overtly it was deleted: "You've gone now Chief, we ain't got nothing—fuckin lost, Oh God!"

Chef takes over as best he can Chief's role as the voice of reason and duty, insisting only that the mission continue "on the boat," but the way they go on the boat remains Lance's. He performs Chief's obsequies, painting his face and laying him to rest in the ancestral river into which Chief disappears leaving only a bubble (though Willard will seem to take Chief with him



Apocalypse Now: Dennis Hopper, Martin Sheen, and Frederick Forrest.

when he emerges himself from the river, like the opening image of Fuller's *The Steel Helmet*, to sacrifice Kurtz). Lance is agonized over Chief too, climbing back on the boat with his play arrow still on his head, and from here he simply joins the jungle: we see him lead the boat with a surfer dance on the bow as they near Kurtz. It is Chef who, despite his clear-headed rejection of Kurtz's appeal, is vulnerable to Kurtz, and it is Lance whom Willard takes with him for the confrontation, as if Willard knew that this irrationality, this appeal of a "logic" which is finally a kind of madness, has to be worked through in terms more appropriate for Lance than for Chef.

But of course Lance's appropriateness for it means absorption by it, no use to Willard. We see him crouch on the bow holding a spear, and he watches detached and amused as Willard is muddled, twirled, and led into Kurtz's temple. From there, Lance simply goes native—we see him dance around the fire with the natives in a loin-cloth, gather little children round him during the ceremonies, and seem to lead in the sacrifice of the water buffalo, smearing its head with blood and sharing in the milling of people around the dead beast, the dimly-rendered rituals of the hacking off its flesh for burial to ensure fertility of the fields (since *The Golden Bough's* reading of such rites in Cambodia is surely what is connoted here). Willard's sacrifice of Kurtz, then, is the way to get Lance home. The acts are the same, the slaying of the carabao and the slaying of Kurtz, yet different: Lance would stay in that world, but that Willard kills Kurtz permits what Jessie L. Weston (in the other book that we see that Kurtz reads) calls "the freeing of the waters," and their healing rain washes the mud from Lance's upturned face. *Apocalypse Now* faces up to Lance as what is left of America, and redeems him by the rejection of Kurtz.

But that it is finally a rejection, when Willard kills Kurtz, remains to be proved. Kurtz, after all, who incites Willard to it, thinks the act is a ritual sacrifice affirming what he takes to be the truths revealed in Frazer and Weston—the ritual sacrifice by which a new priest/king takes on the functions and power of the old one by killing him, but hence affirming the truth of his reign, becoming—not rejecting—him. There is much reason to say that, as Willard learned the premises of Kurtz's logic on the trip up river, he learns its conclusions with Kurtz: since civilization is "lies" and leads to the world of "paralyzed force, gesture without movement" described in *The Hollow Men*, the world of the hollow generals and their "program," when what the photo-journalist calls "dialectics", the argument that "fractions" are a trivialization next to the simplicities of whole numbers and of love and hate, requires an acceptance of "primordial instincts to kill, without feeling, without passion, without judgment." The unmotivated alternation of lights and darks (begun at Do Lung, and with Roach, a pre-Kurtz)—Willard and Kurtz illuminated, fading, fading back again sometimes themselves and sometimes as the other—suggest Willard becoming Kurtz, different only in that, in tune with that harmony with the natural cycle from which vegetation rituals derive their form and meaning (dark and light alternating, like the episodes in the film), Kurtz is an old wintry king, a Fisher King, whose lands are barren simply because regeneration requires a preceding death, and Willard, the new king, must replace him (to become old in his turn) as spring replaces winter.

This is the very ground and justification of Kurtz's obsession with death (as it is often a rationale of violent people); the belief that in some primeval sense the fertilizing sacrifice, the shedding of blood, will ensure (by sympathetic magic) that the

cycles will go on—death will guarantee life, and life will be renewed. Kurtz prepares Willard, like a medieval knight, for his initiation: we see a long period of waiting, a purgation and cleansing by rain, and by the final proof that there is no counting on Chef's trust in "the boat." Though Willard (as always) rejects the food offered him after this ordeal, he receives further instruction from Kurtz in the mysteries: Kurtz reads *The Hollow Men* while the photo-journalist glosses its dialectics; Willard is given an empty time to inspect the medals and pictures and books; Kurtz tells the story of the severed arms while eating a pomegranate, the fruit associated with Persephone, the very symbol of the dependence of resurrection on death. At the close of the story Willard looks at, and flexes, the hand being called upon to do the ritual deed (as he does again just before he does it) while Kurtz, with insistent implication, asks him to bear his son the truth "if I were to be killed, Willard."

Everything asks Willard to kill Kurtz, and it is the irony that strikes him most, that he will be promoted for it "and I wasn't even in their fucking army anymore," since killing Kurtz will be the profoundest possible way of joining him and leaving "the program." The sacrifice will say "yes, Kurtz was right, his kind of strength, crystalline, pure, is the only way to be in tune with the nature of things, though of course like the year itself the principle decays into the appearance of chaos and its deep underlying order has to be reaffirmed, a spring-time version needs to come." And Willard kills Kurtz while Lance kills the carabao which had stepped from Kurtz's side, a multi-level assent to ritual (the people to their imitative version, the priest/kings to their canonical one) being established, an assent to the nature of life as dependent on assent to death. The Vietnamese paroxysm will have become (so Willard and Lance can carry the message back to America) life-affirming, not guilt-inducing. Willard's face recedes behind the idol's, but that might simply say that now we know what reality is and we assent to it, to a stratum of the irrational, the primordial, as the true rock and grounding of our lives.

Now this, Kurtz's vision of what Willard should make of himself, would be indeed to read Willard as Michael Corleone, except that the transformation would be approved—the jungle left to the idol and the healing rain is different from Michael alone among the autumn leaves in his moral emptiness. But I think one look at Kurtz told us, as it told Willard, that Kurtz for all his appeal was wrong, and I think we must not be enticed by what is Kurtzian about Willard's act into thinking that Coppola has changed his mind about the final rejection we must make of the apparently compelling, but ultimately false, Corleone/Kurtz logic.

Indeed Willard sacrifices Kurtz, but not to replace him or to roam in the sacred

grove like Frazer's slave/priest/king. Willard does seem almost to become Kurtz as he performs the ritual murder, his head resembling Kurtz's and his hands finally, in fulfillment of the film's beginning, becoming the bloody focus of the final shot of the sacrificial ritual. But there is a difference nonetheless. Willard becomes a smeared and Kurtz-like mask when he appears for the natives adoration at the top of the stairs like Kurtz before, but his smeared face is not *patterned*, *painted* like Lance's or like Kurtz's when he dropped Chef's head in Willard's lap. Experience costs Willard and we see the price, but Willard does not *ritualize* it, paint himself in tune with it, or institutionalize it as Kurtz does. Coming down the stairs Willard tosses down the ritual knife (whereas Lance and the natives gleefully capered around the dead carabao) and all around him the natives lay down their weapons, relieved, it seems, to be rid of this madness, this elevation of life's sad component, death, to the principle behind life itself.

No doubt the natives will sacrifice buffaloes for their crops' fertility again, and no one denies the continued existence of the idol in the jungle behind which we know there lurks one face of human nature. But as the PBR pulls away from the camp and turns, for the first time in the film, to go from left to right, the U-turn it made at the start of the trip to Kurtz seems decisively reversed—we have looked Kurtz's logic in the face, like Willard, and seen that it was not good. One can think of the film's ending as the quiet image which concludes the 70mm release, of the idol in the jungle and the rain, or as the air-strike and destruction of the camp which goes with the final titles of the 35mm version. In the former Willard leaves the jungle to its peace, knowing that it stands for a certain part of him which he disavows by leaving it. In the latter he disavows that part more explicitly, destroying the site of Kurtz's institutionalization of horror as a principle of conduct. But in neither case is Kurtz affirmed, as it was the whole thrust of the film's sequence to seem that he would be.

Willard has found in the film what it means to carry Kurtz's logic to its end, and has rejected it in an act which Kurtz foresaw and which is Kurtzian, but which pulls back from Kurtz—not to the General's half-way measures, but to a position of understanding which we can share. It is, after all, Coppola's genius to make little moral essays, using all the resources of the Hollywood colossus, about which we can *think*. The way of "strength," we can see, is as wrong as the half-baked way of "decent restraint." The sacrifice of Kurtz was not obsessional but cathartic. The horror can be worked through and hence, in part, overcome. It is always there, Willard's face (and ours) behind the idol, but perhaps we need not, for all of that, be obsessed with the way the peaceful jungle can sometimes explode in flames, or see this obsession as a

prefiguration of Apocalypse.

It is a whole movie we have seen, after all. It included not only the cathartic ritual of Kurtz's death, but all that lead up to it, especially that trip up river which established not only the absurdity of civilization but, by the sheer value of those who stood for America in frailty and contradiction (but in sanity and sweetness of spirit too) the necessity of rejection of its alternatives. This film suggests not that we should have become Kurtz, made horror our friend, and cleaned up Vietnam, but that we should face up to what has been Kurtzian in ourselves, recognize it, but also reject it and that cult of strength and certainty for which it stood. We never should have been in Vietnam in the first place, and we are not committed to thinking ourselves exemplified by Michael Corleone because we have to assent to the fact that we have acted like him.

William Cadbury

Manhattan

After the somberness of *Interiors*, Woody Allen has returned to the romantic comedy style of *Annie Hall*. The result is his most lyrical and emotional film to date. Although it may not be as complex as *Annie Hall*, *Manhattan* is a magnificent film, subtle both in expression and in feeling. It proves that Allen's genius is still growing and capable of fertile surprises.

In *Manhattan* Allen plays Isaac Davis (inaptly nicknamed Ike, as if an old Hebrew could become an icon of Gentile leadership), a TV comedy writer who suffers the slings and arrows of outrageous romance. For one thing, his ex-wife Jill (Meryl Streep) is a bisexual who left him for another woman (Karen Ludwig as Connie). Isaac is humiliated when Jill exposes their marital break-up in an "honest" book, *Marriage, Divorce, and Selfhood*. In addition, the 42-year-old Isaac feels squeamish about his affair with a 17-year-old high-school student, Tracy (Mariel Hemingway). He breaks off with her in order to have an affair with a nervous, chic journalist, Mary Wilke (Diane Keaton), but only after the collapse of Mary's affair with Isaac's best friend, a married English professor named Yale (Michael Murphy). At the end Mary goes back to Yale, Yale leaves his wife Emily (Anne Byrne), Isaac goes back to Tracy, and Tracy goes to England on a six-month theater scholarship.

This tangle of lovings and leavings demonstrates the theme of a short story Isaac is writing: "People in Manhattan are constantly creating these real unnecessary neurotic problems for themselves that keep them from dealing with more unsolvable, terrifying problems about the universe." More specifically, the film details the pro-

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fessional and romantic compromises by which man avoids confronting his insignificance in the cosmos and his inability to control his fate. Both concerns are familiar from Allen's earlier work.

The film's dominant theme is man's need for personal integrity in a decaying culture. In an empty anthropology classroom, Isaac attacks Yale for having undermined their friendship and his marriage by resuming his affair with Mary. "Well, I'm not a saint, okay," Yale admits, but Isaac holds fast: "You're too easy on yourself." Yale charges that Isaac is too rigid and self-righteous: "You think you're God." Isaac replies: "Well, I've got to model myself after someone." In this exchange Isaac prefers to follow a remote, even impossible, ideal rather than adhere to the corrupt human norms around him. Behind Yale we see a showcase of skulls that suggest a kind of unsupported cerebralism or rationalization. Isaac's lecture is undercut by the 5'4" ape-man skeleton that stands grinning beside him. Compared to Yale's skulls, the skeleton associated with Isaac is the full man. "What are future generations going to say about us?" Isaac asks, as if the skeleton has reminded him of man's responsibility beyond his own desires: "Some day we're going to be like him... It's very important to have personal integrity. I'm going to be hanging in a classroom someday. I want to make sure that when I thin out I'm well thought of." From the *momento mori* Isaac draws the need for an assertive morality. There may be a comical denial of death in the euphemism "when I thin out"—after Allen's fear of the cold, analytic touch of film teachers—but Isaac admits moral imperatives which Yale and Mary deny in their indulgent pursuit of tortured pleasure.

In *Manhattan* Allen continues his satire against man's foolish use of logic and culture. Hence the skulls when Yale rationalizes his betrayal of Isaac. Often there is a comical discrepancy between what the characters know and what they can effectively use in their lives. As Isaac admits, "When it comes to relationships with women I'm the winner of the August Strindberg Award." Although he still wants her himself, he warns Yale that Mary is "the winner of the Zelda Fitzgerald Emotional Maturity Award." Both quips combine intellectual knowledge with emotional deficiency. As Isaac tells the cerebral Mary, "Nothing worth knowing can be understood with the mind," for "the brain is man's most insignificant organ," and "everything really valuable has to enter through another opening." Similarly, Mary's first husband may be a semantics professor, but he has trouble putting together a sentence. At the Museum of Modern Art reception, the sophisticates applaud a biting satire in the *Times* against the neo-Nazis marching in New Jersey, but the verbal and fragile Isaac prefers the more direct persuasion by brick and bat. Man's culture is no defense against his greatest



Manhattan: Diane Keaton and Woody Allen.

dangers. Greater truths are told by the heart and the senses than by the mind. Not for Isaac the problem reported by the dim girl, who finally had an orgasm but was told by her analyst that it was the wrong kind! Isaac's orgasms are all "right on the money" because they are experiences untouched by analysis. He learns to accept his relationship with Tracy in the same way. Tracy's last line, "You have to have a little faith in people," is really a call to trust his instincts. Tracy's own faith in her relationship with Isaac overrides her sense that "maybe people weren't made for long relationships, but for a series of relationships with different links."

Otherwise Isaac is a character of exemplary integrity. He wouldn't court Mary ("never in a million years") as long as Yale is involved with her—a courtesy not reciprocated. Rather than accept the approval of an audience whose "standards have been systematically lowered over the years," Isaac quits his "antiseptic" TV show and undertakes a novel—about the decay of culture. On a minor, but telling, level, Isaac resists the temptation silently to assent to Mary's and Yale's flippant consignment of major cultural figures to their Academy of the Over-rated (e.g., Lenny Bruce, Mahler, Böll, Van Gogh, Ingmar Bergman). When it would have been easy to smile along, Isaac affirms that the attacked artists "are all terrific, every one you mentioned." Here he supports his earlier claim (reminiscent of Allen's Joey in *Interiors*) that "Talent is luck; you've got to have courage."

In a parallel scene later, Isaac enumerates the things that make life worth living. They vary from unpretentious popular culture (Groucho Marx, Willie Mays) to various forms of the classical (the Jupiter Symphony, Louis Armstrong's "Potato Head Blues," Flaubert's *A Sentimental Education*, Marlon Brando, Frank Sinatra), and from art to experience, when he turns from Cézanne's apples and pears to "the crabs at

Sam Wo's" and, climactically, to Tracy's face. This scene begins with a full-screen close-up of a tape recorder. At first we do not know whether Isaac or the machine is reciting the list. When we see Isaac speaking, Allen's point is that values are due solely to man, not to the things in his setting. The resolution of this ambiguous opening establishes man as the center of values and choice in his world. At the end of the scene, Isaac retrieves the harmonica that Tracy gave him at their last meeting. The harmonica is not just another thing, like the tape recorder; it embodies and revives the harmony between Isaac and his lost Tracy. In coming to accept his love for Tracy, Isaac receives his own sentimental education.

The theme of integrity relates to the feel of the film. As Isaac describes himself as "a non-compromiser" who is "living in the past," the film assumes a rigorous, classical spirit from its straight-forward romantic narrative, its resolute black-and-white photography, and its George Gershwin score. Moreover, Allen's choice of songs provides specific settings in which to read the scenes. For example, the orchestrations of songs over the scenes between Tracy and Isaac are direct expressions of love. Behind their first intimate scene in his apartment, "Our Love is Here to Stay" undercuts Isaac's detachment from her. Over their ride through Central Park we hear "He Loves and She Loves," which is reprised when Isaac's list of life's rewards concludes with Tracy's face. When he finds her in the apartment lobby, about to leave for London, his sense of her remoteness is suggested visually in the intervening door, a bar across its glass, and musically by the song, "They're Writing Songs of Love, But Not for Me." On the other hand, the selections of music in Isaac's scenes with Mary are ominous: "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" at the MOMA reception; "Someone to Watch Over Me," when they take her dog, "a penis-substitute," for a walk (and he men-

tions his short story about his mother, "The Castrating Zionist.") When they drive in the country to "'S Wonderful," it is at first unclear whether Isaac is with Tracy or with Mary. We hear "Embraceable You" when Isaac and Mary dance, enjoy a murky boat-ride, and walk in the city. When this song is repeated over the end credits, the emotion refers to the more embraceable Tracy. When Isaac frolics with his son, Willie, the song, "Love is Sweeping the Country," relates to the later scene of a football team of single fathers with their sons, as if the phenomenon of fractured families, not love, were what is sweeping the country. When Isaac first sees Jill's book, we hear "Oh, Lady Be Good." In these ironic references, the songs establish a setting which either expresses or undercuts the attitude of the characters. The musical setting is analogous to Allen's use of Manhattan as the symbolic setting of his film.

Manhattan opens with a three-minute abstract sequence which establishes the setting and its characters, first the skyline, then individual buildings, then the streets and population. We hear Allen's voice, which turns out to be Isaac's, choosing from a variety of openings for the first chapter of his novel. The different tones of Isaac's openings suggest the different meanings that Allen's *Manhattan* may carry. For instance, in one opening, the hero admits that he romanticizes Manhattan "out of all proportion." In another he presents it as a virile force, in another as "the metaphor for the decay of contemporary culture." But the reading of the place depends upon the character of the reader, whether it is "as tough and romantic as the city he loved," or a sexual power, like the city, "coiled like a jungle cat." Isaac's hero—and so Allen's—describes the city as a projection of his own character. Rather than the setting influencing the character, the character projects his own mood and nature onto the setting. When in the mellow dawn Isaac tells Mary, "This is really a great city. I don't care what people say, I'm really knocked out," this is a tribute not to any real Manhattan, but to the mood between Mary and Isaac, which the city at that point seems to embody.

Similarly the setting offers both elegant beauty and the rough streets, with a citizenry "desensitized by noise, music, drugs, and garbage." The city is in constant change, as one scene of a demolition crew at work reveals. Of the innumerable and contradictory aspects which will characterize the setting is the individual's choice. To both Allen's and Isaac's heroes, "New York still existed in black and white and pulsated to the great tunes of George Gershwin." But this is due to the idealism of the characters. When we hear "New York was his town and it always would be," we see a contradictory shot of gleaming, modernistic high-rises, denoting the change in the city's physical nature. The setting is a projection of the human viewers. What one is and does, therefore, is one's own responsibility

and not to be attributed to any influence from the setting. As Isaac works around to an affirmation of life's pleasures and his love with Tracy, the opening montage concludes with an exuberant harmony between the climax of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and the spectacular fireworks against the night skyline. The delicate and precise editing here discovers harmony in an ambivalent and discordant setting.

This point also lies behind the film's most striking visual technique. Allen often holds his stationary camera on a physical space after the actors have vacated it. The pretense is that the setting has its own personality independent of the human life that passes through it. But Allen's point is the opposite. The meaning lies in the human choice. In this spirit, the film does not have a title shot. We read "Manhattan" from a flashing hotel sign in the opening montage—but we also read a static "Parking" in the same shot. The film does not announce its name or identity, but rather seems to discover it in the setting. This is a formal equivalent to the characters' rooting their behavior in what they find rather than in their own ethical core.

Similarly, Yale joins Isaac and Tracy at the art gallery by stepping into the frame from an off-camera position and from behind a pillar; then Mary makes her first appearance by coming out from behind Yale. Here Allen uses the space of his shot to express the arbitrary framing of elements and the continuous life beyond the shot. In the marina scene, Isaac passes through a stationary shot while his wife's book is read out loud, railing against his Jewish-Liberal paranoia, male chauvinism, self-righteous misanthropy and his narcissistic obsession with death. The camera holds on the beautiful waterfront both before and after the harsh quotation and Isaac's sullen reaction. The shot establishes an ambivalence in the peaceful beauty. The calm waters seem to confirm Jill's shallow cheer and to deny Isaac's gloom. But in the earlier boating scene, Isaac reached into the water and be-fouled his hand. Beautiful waters run yucky.

In *Manhattan* Allen's compositions avoid the sometimes obvious symbolism of *Interiors*. For example, in a single shot at the symphony we view a line of profiles. Isaac, Mary, and Yale shift restlessly and shuffle to avert each other's eyes; Emily stares straight ahead. Later, we learn that she has known about Yale's infidelities but chose to ignore them; Emily's rigid stare may be as evasive as the shiftiness of the others. Similarly, when Mary phones Isaac to invite him out for an afternoon walk, Isaac is outside, but photographed from within his apartment. No, he tells Mary, he hasn't read the *Times* piece about the faceless masses in China; he's been too busy with the lingerie ads. As he chooses between two contrasting cultures of facelessness, his own face is obscured from us by the plants and venetian blinds through

which he is seen. Moreover, the shot of him outside expresses his sense of remoteness from Mary, that he must not intrude upon his friend's affair.

The richest scene occurs in the planetarium, in which Mary and Isaac take refuge from the rain. The once-antagonistic characters are drawn into an emotional attraction against a backdrop of the moon and stars. The location suggests that their love may require such an other-worldly setting. Moreover, as they grow more intimate, Isaac and Mary assume more of the screen, and the lunar landscape is allowed less. The setting disappears altogether for their most intimate exchange. Also, their inchoate love seems to be extravagantly literalized by the moon imagery, given the June-moon lyrical tradition over which Gershwin reigns supreme. This setting brings down to earth the "problems about the universe" that Isaac's Manhattanites avoid. Finally the force of human habit is comically imaged in the Japanese tourist who walks across the moon and pauses to take a snapshot (effectively of the cinema audience). This scene suggests that Manhattan contains the cosmos.

As an emblem of moral and aesthetic choices, Manhattan means something rather different in *Manhattan* than it meant when Annie Hall compared the insular Alvy Singer to it ("this island unto yourself"). In *Manhattan* Allen's hero reconciles a compromised, new Manhattan with his old idealized one and extends his rigorous ethics into a romance that exceeds logical and conventional limits. Despite the familiar Jewish, sexual, and paranoia jokes, Isaac is Allen's most competent and confident role. He smokes, drinks, drives, has no trouble getting girls, and at one point invites his audience to share his self-acceptance. When Mary compliments his "good sense of humor," Isaac replies, "Thanks. I don't need you to tell me that. I've been making good money off it for years now." Allen is still drawing his fictional character out of the limbo between his own experience and his public image. Thus the first sound we hear is the instrument Allen is associated with, the clarinet solo beginning *Rhapsody in Blue*, and the first scene is set in Allen's favorite hangout, Elaine's. (On the other hand, Yale warns us against taking Isaac as Allen: "Gossip is the new pornography").

Allen expands and inflects the vocabulary that his comedy has developed over the years. When Isaac comes home with shattering news from Jill—her book may be made into a movie and their son is taking ballet classes—and is about to hear that Mary is returning to Yale, there is a fleeting image of his vulnerability. When he closes his door we see that it has three locks and a security pole as defenses against the outside world. This passing joke is not even paid the emphasis of a close-up. Because Allen developed it more fully in *Bananas*, the image can be quoted quickly. Similarly,

the sidewalk cafe where Yale breaks off with Mary recalls the health-food restaurant where Annie Hall declined Alvy's proposal. The point of this echo is the common occurrence of such scenes. Behind Yale we see another couple lunching happily—at a rather early stage in their inevitable separation! Behind Mary we see another romantic mismatch, an elderly man and a young lady, that parallels both her situation with Yale and Isaac's with Tracy.

The familiar Woody Allen hero, for all his competence, remains shivered by the impossibility of justice. At one point Mary, before making love, asks Isaac what he's thinking. "I think there's something wrong with me," he replies, "because I've never had a relationship with a woman that's lasted longer than the one Hitler had with Eva Braun." Here Allen is at the peak of his artistry. He freezes in a one-liner the aspiration, compromise, horrifying history, and rueful resignation that comprise the ethical man's response to the ambivalences of modern life.

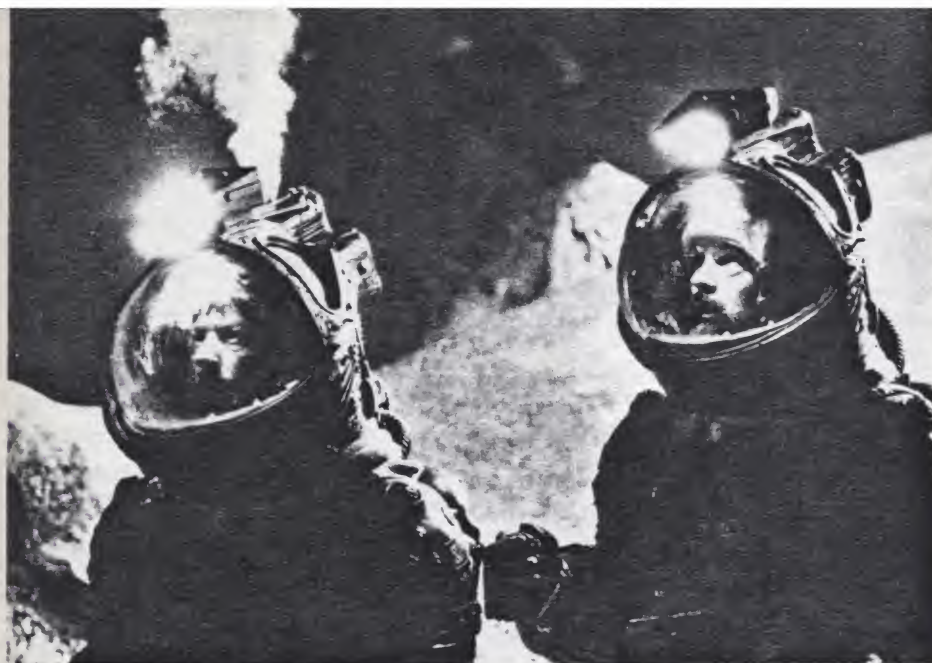
Maurice Yacowar

Alien

The big hit of the summer has been casually written off by critics as an old-fashioned scare movie and a space-age *Jaws*. *Monster*, a magazine geared toward the adolescent reader, gleefully credits it with a record 13 mass audience gasps. But before dismissing *Alien* as just another overproduced piece of schlock, aspects other than the horror factor should be examined. For the filmgoer who can distance himself from the occasional gore of the first viewing, or who can sit through it a second time, *Alien* furnishes more than simply an opportunity to scream in unison with a couple of hundred other people. Irwin Allen, the producer of disaster films, may disagree, but people do go to movies for reasons other than a desire to be scared out of their seats.

The basic purpose of any film as an art form is twofold—to reflect the society that enables it to be produced, and to affect the way in which that society in turn views itself. *Alien* is an uneven film, i.e., its ability to initiate change or increased social awareness is limited in lieu of instant audience reaction. Unfortunately, many who see it will get nothing out of it except an increased adrenalin level. But *Alien* does reflect today's mores to a surprising degree by portraying a futuristic milieu with contemporary protagonists and contemporary themes. It is therefore neither a truly futuristic film nor an old-fashioned one.

The screenplay is disconcertingly simple. In some future time, ostensibly in the 21st Century, an alien life form with remarkable environmental adaptability is inadvertently brought aboard an earth-bound space freighter. Only one out of seven crew members survives the creature's unwelcome visit.



Alien: John Hurt and Tom Skerritt.

Alien does not conveniently fit into the science fiction format. Space fantasy films, from the Buck Rogers serials to *Star Wars*, extol the wonders of technology, usually spending a considerable amount of screen time displaying gadgetry at the expense of characterizations. Following the lead of 2001's computer Hal, *Star Wars* carried technology to the extreme by personifying robots and underexposing real humans. *Alien* uses its share of terminal-screens and sophisticated apparatus (including an on-board computer), but, with the exception of the hypersleep capsules that enable the crew to artificially hibernate, no equipment exceeds present-day technology and humans never play second fiddle to it.

Initially one is more impressed with the efficiency and matter-of-fact attitude of the five male and two female crew members than with their complex surroundings. Not surprisingly, they act like astronauts, but these men and women with at least a century of progress beyond contemporary earthlings are rooted in our time. There is more than the mere need of audience identification at work here. Three of the crew are smokers. Lingering shots of them engaging in this obsolete activity repeatedly call it to the viewer's attention. The captain wears a beard (which is mentioned in *Alien's* novelization as a holdover from the past and a sign of individuality). Kitsch objects appear in the crew's living quarters (bear in mind that these items would be antiques to the spaceship's inhabitants). The engineer and his assistant continually gripe about wages, and the keen professionalism that was so impressive at the film's beginning gradually breaks away under stress.

Alien may be trying to depict blue collar tastes and attitudes of tomorrow inasmuch as the crew members are basically technicians in a space "tug" and are not the highly skilled astronauts of *their* time. It is more likely, however, that the makers of *Alien* realized the ease in portraying the

technology of the future and the difficulty in portraying the people. The problem is comparable to a traveler taking a supersonic jet to a foreign country and being unable to speak the language. It is almost impossible to imagine a higher social order among humans, although some day it must occur if the species is to survive. Such a state would undoubtedly display a greater degree of harmony between individuals than we now have, or those in *Alien* possess. In viewing them one wonders how humans could have changed so little and still have weathered the aggression and disunity of this century plus another 50 years or more. What *Alien* explicitly points out is that, regardless of equality in race and gender, if people work together in the distant future as poorly as we do now, they will not survive.

Much has been made of the alien monster and the recent trend toward organic, slime horror. In *Alien* the birth and metamorphosis of the strange invader seems designed to disgust as well as terrify. Donald Sutherland's pod birth in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* aims at the same effect. *The Amityville Horror* features a slime-oozing door. Movies have gone beyond the blood and guts stage to include the mucous membranes. The aversion toward exposed tissue and the inner workings of organisms is not unusual. Young children apparently have a greater capacity for repulsiveness than the rest of us. Toy companies now sell a green "slime" and kits to make plastic, slippery "creepy crawlers." By the time they reach adolescence young people use the word "gross" to describe just about anything. An almost pathological preoccupation with cleanliness in this age of prepackaged meats, blemish-free vegetables and scented toilet paper leaves us with very little that can be described as "dirty." Even machines have become clean. What could be more antiseptic than a computer? (*Demon Seed* failed miserably to make a

monster of one. It was simply too greaseless to be frightening.)

The slimy creature in *Alien* emphasizes the contrast between the sterile, computerized interior of the space vehicle—a world which we find increasingly familiar—and the organic, chemical world to which we really belong. Obviously, the alien monster also represents the most overused Freudian reference in films from Méliès to Hitchcock—the ever-popular phallic symbol. The sexual allusions did not creep into *Alien* accidentally. Screenwriters Dan O'Bannon, Walter Hill, and David Giler fashioned a reptilian-like animal that forces humans into a "strange sort of physical union." Swiss artist H.R. Giger, known for his bizarre and erotic paintings, designed the alien and the skeletal landscape from which it originates. The sexual imagery pervades the film to such an extent that even the spaceship itself takes on phallic proportions. Nor is the symbolism limited to the male anatomy. The alien first adopts the shape of a crab-like creature that attaches itself to a crew member's face. Later when this parasitic form is abandoned, the ship's science officer examines its underlying folds with all the relish of a zealous gynecologist. The alien assumes blatantly phallic dimensions in the violent death of the first crew member before evolving into a large animal that resembles a lizard with a horizontally elongated head that contains at least three sets of overlapping teeth. It perfunctorily strangles in a non-sexual way the male crew members to whose fate the audience is privy. As the alien's size increases, only parts of its body are shown, and its perverted sexuality becomes more pronounced. The two women on the ship are destined for an especially diabolical fate. The way in which the monster's slimy tail moves in from the right side of the frame to slowly encircle the female navigator's body leaves no doubt that a violent seduction is about to take place.

Finally, one crew member remains to elude and somehow destroy the creature. By this time the audience is well aware that *Alien* is yet another movie about a female in distress. The difference this time, however, is that our lone heroine is a strong woman relying upon her wits, and with no man in a white space suit waiting to rescue her. What many feminist thought would be a compelling statement turns into a bitter-sweet declaration of female equality and strength. Ripley, the woman in question, has been depicted throughout as a forthright, competent, and courageous individual. If her advice had been taken originally, the alien would never have been brought aboard the ship. In one scene of a vicious fight with the science officer, she is practically choked to death when he literally tries to shove a girlie magazine down her throat, as if to force her to comply with the outmoded image of women.

Ripley is the kind of self-sufficient female the movies have lacked for too long.

In a film conceived, written, and directed by men, her character is truly impressive. Some feel that the final scene of *Alien* negates the positive image of Ripley that has been built up earlier in the film. In it she undresses down to her skivvies, seemingly for the benefit of the voyeurs in the audience. The scene is not gratuitous when viewed in the entire context of the film. Symbolically Ripley has been engaging in various forms of sexual activity since the movie's opening frames. There is a definite link between her and the male imagery of the spaceship. In the opening shots of the shuttlecraft hovering over the alien planetoid, the craft's engines vibrate the bridge where five of the crew members direct its movements. In closeups of each individual only Ripley is vibrating as well. If this example appears to stretch the point, there is a more obvious instance of a sexual relationship between Ripley and the spaceship when she arms the craft to self-destruct in order to blow up the alien in it. The process involves manually extracting large, phallic cylinders from the vessel's floor. As she speeds away in the shuttlecraft to get as far from the exploding spaceship as possible, a head shot shows Ripley perspiring at the temples and panting in exhaustion and anticipation. The explosion occurs too near, and the shuttlecraft shudders. Ripley moves her head from side to side as bright colors fill the sky, not once but twice. Woman and machine are spiritually one.

The euphoria is shortlived because the alien has been hiding in the shuttlecraft all along. Mistakenly believing she is safe, Ripley at her most vulnerable point, disrobes and prepares to enter the hyper-sleep capsule for the long journey home. The camera assumes the eye view of the creature and thereby implicates the audience in the impending assault. A typical rape scenario has been established with the viewer in the role of the peeping tom, but allegiance has already been pledged to the potential victim. It is Ripley with whom the audience overwhelmingly identifies, not the alien. One could argue that unanimous empathy with the woman occurs only because the creature hiding in the shadows of the shuttlecraft is a monstrous, perverted phallic representation. But identification with the creature, regardless of how disgusting it may be, has not been unheard of in the past. Even Mia Farrow's violation by the devil monster in *Rosemary's Baby* contains indulgent erotic overtones in favor of the aggressor.

In *Alien* the audience has been witnessing, as the saying goes, a "private party" in which Ripley needs no one but herself. This statement of sexual independence and the audience's concurrence with it supersedes the voyeurism foisted upon the viewer.

Alien pulls off a clever switch in not only having a woman as the dominating force in a typically male survival situation, but in the casting of an unknown actress in the most important role. Sigourney

Weaver, a newcomer to motion pictures, plays Ripley. Ms. Weaver is trained for the stage, but let's hope she doesn't stay there. As a film overly concerned with the visual effects, *Alien* does not provide the opportunity for her to engage in any sustained monologue. She obviously can act, but in this first movie appearance her persona already speaks more eloquently than any script. A face like hers, so adaptable to the medium, seldom reaches celluloid. Physical beauty is irrelevant, although the contours of her features seem created especially for the camera. It is rather the intelligent intensity in Weaver's eyes and the self-assured grace that achieve their full impact only when magnified on a movie screen. A young teenager watching the first few minutes of *Alien* succinctly demonstrated the effects of Weaver's magic. Unaware that she would become the movie's heroine and disregarding the possible ribbing from his friends, he leaned forward in his seat as if to move closer to her image on the screen and said simply, "I love her."

The basic downfall in *Alien* is not the acting, which is uniformly excellent, the screenplay, or the unusual and stimulating sets. Ridley Scott's direction has nowhere near the potency of his previous film *The Duellists*, which created a big splash at Cannes a few years ago and promptly sunk after its release in the United States from underpromotion. Scott was at one time the most successful director of TV commercials in Great Britain. What made *The Duellists* so impressive was that the film allowed the plot to develop at a realistic, sometimes even leisurely, pace. With *Alien* he has regressed to the rapid, unvarying pace of television. Although the tactic works on young viewers who have synchronized their inner stop watches to the quick editing of the small screen, it comes off as clichéd to experienced filmgoers. The suspense never builds to an unbearable point as it should, and every anxious moment resembles the previous one with too much visual information in rapid sequence being shot at the viewer. Overall, *Alien* resembles a 30-second "Coke Adds Life" commercial—slick, bloated, and unnecessarily busy.

To his advantage Ridley Scott serves as his own camera operator. (More directors, instead of emulating Hitchcock, should look through the camera once in a while. It is amazing how many obviously do not think in visual terms.) Scott has a good visual sense but oftentimes attempts overly ambitious shots that only succeed in being pretentious. There is one such shot of the alien taken from behind the ears of the crew's pet cat. Instead of an over-the-shoulder reaction showing the cat's point of view, the shot signals an impossible source of the subjective eye—like the cliché of the camera inside a fireplace.

Alien is not a great movie, but it may inadvertently set the tone for subsequent films of its kind. Space fantasies can now speculate about the future of the human

race without resorting to a worship of technology. The authority figure, the captain in *Alien's* case, can be killed off in the middle of the film without the risk of the audience losing interest in the fate of the other, "lesser," characters. A black man can last until nearly the end instead of being a daring but expendable decoy. The final fade-out can be on the face of the victorious woman. Anyone can be the hero, not just an unemotional white man. The strong, silent type is dead. May he rest in peace.

Laura Sanden

Escape from Alcatraz

The last time Don Siegel, Clint Eastwood, and Bruce Surtees collaborated on a film, in 1971, they came up with *Dirty Harry*, a powerhouse that remains unsurpassed as the finest action film of this decade. Their latest work doesn't have the pulverizing force of that film (few films do, so that's no serious flaw), but it does provide, as does the trio's superbly strange *The Beguiled* from earlier in 1971, its own individual rewards. As direct and economical as its title, *Escape From Alcatraz* is a textbook example of precision and craftsmanship.

Burdened with the limitations of an "action director" label, Siegel has spent much of his 33-year career as a director doing his best with unexceptional material, as in his last film, *Telefon*, a poor script with a resolution so unsatisfactory that the most he could do—and did—was create a few good parts in a disappointing whole. (Even *Dirty Harry*, when attention is paid to the script, apart from Siegel's treatment, is a fairly routine cop story that a director like Richard Fleischer or Ted Post could easily have made into a boring, though no doubt bloody, piece of junk.) Richard Tuggle's screenplay for *Escape From Alcatraz*, an impressive screenwriting debut, provides Siegel with the rare opportunity of working with a script written in a tight style naturally suited to his direction. Tuggle wastes as few words as Siegel does frames.

The 1962 escape of Frank Morris, played by Eastwood, and the brothers John and Clarence Anglin (Fred Ward and Jack Thibau) is the only unsolved escape attempt out of 14, involving a total of 39 men, in the 29-year history of The Rock. The three men were presumed drowned, although their bodies were never recovered. Tuggle and Siegel only elaborate on this to the extent of a slight implication of success; the unsolved question of the escapees' fate reinforces a strange undertone of mystery existing in the film from the beginning, a subtle enrichment of texture seldom present in prison movies.

The actual escape occupies no more than the final half-hour, while the majority of the film establishes the characters, their surroundings, and the complex preparations for the break. Siegel works in a deli-



Escape from Alcatraz: Clint Eastwood.

berately unspectacular and methodical style, not so much building as simply progressing to the escape, which comes not as an elaborate finale to a big build-up, but rather as a surprisingly swift, seemingly simple end to a lot of hard work. (Some comments have been made by reviewers about the escape's simplicity, calling it a disappointment, a damaging flaw, in spite of the fact that it is perfectly appropriate to the style of the film. A more spectacular approach—a chase, for example, which is almost the only way to create a larger, more traditional or "suspenseful" climax—would have violated Siegel's established technique, not to mention history. The men would not have escaped had they been discovered and chased. As simple as the escape seems, it remains logical for that very simplicity. In addition, a more involved escape sequence would almost certainly have become unlikely and ultimately tiresome.)

Escape From Alcatraz contains little of the physical action for which Siegel and Eastwood are known, but only the most frivolous fans of either man should be disappointed, since many of the accomplishments here are more impressive, if not always so obvious. Through his almost relentlessly methodical direction, Siegel sets up a subtle but nonetheless gripping tension that he maintains to the final shot. The effects are more subdued but the impact is still strong. For example, there is no action scene to match the brilliant shootout climax of *Madigan* or the hair-raising confrontation with Scorpio under the cross in the park in *Dirty Harry*, but there is a scene which is genuinely frightening, not just for the act itself, but for the grimly straightforward manner in which it is presented: Doc, an aging con portrayed by Roberts Blossom (a fine, touching performance), has had his painting privilege, his only means of coping with life on The Rock, taken away from him by the warden, and he makes his grief known by chopping off

three fingers with a hatchet in the carpentry shop. Done in quick, forceful cuts, superbly timed to avoid either a frenzied impression, or a dissipation of impact from dwelling on any one shot (the editor, Ferris Webster, is one of the most experienced in the business), the scene is remarkably chilling and startling without being gratuitous, or jarringly at odds with the control Siegel exercises so consistently.

Always one of the least pretentious of directors, Siegel approaches the escape as a story to be told, not an opportunity to expound philosophically and pedantically on the prison system or any of the other social issues inherent in the material. They are dealt with as they emerge in the narrative, with Siegel's customary intelligence and restraint; gratuitous social commentary being just as damaging as gratuitous sex or violence. The prisoners are not presented as innocent victims of a cruel, vengeful society, but simply and honestly as men who react to their situation in their own individual ways. The film takes no platform on prison functions, allowing the gloomy, oppressive depiction of life on The Rock—the non-rehabilitative nature of which is proudly stated by the warden (played with eccentric, businesslike nastiness by Patrick McGowan)—to speak for itself.

Surtees's cinematography emphasizes subdued colors, illustrating Siegel's comment in a recent interview (*Filmmakers*, June 1979) that, "No matter what color it is, a prison is black and white." Surtees is fond of using darkness, and does some beautifully skilled work here, notably the escape and the opening sequence of Morris's arrival, the excellence of which could be overlooked because it plays beneath the credits. He also captures the necessary feeling of confinement and lack of privacy, working in the cramped spaces of the cells or in the more open areas, which are no more private since they are filled with cons under the eyes of guards. The camerawork is fluid

within appropriate limits; no expansive movements or airy, free-looking spaces. Surtees and Siegel also present the San Francisco skyline as it must have seemed to the inmates—hopelessly close, beautiful and frustrating.

As for old Squint, it isn't very likely he will ever be overrated as an actor, though he is still too easily underrated. Morris is a somewhat mysterious figure—we don't know, for instance, exactly what brings him to The Rock, just that he has a record of grand larceny and robbery, but Eastwood gives us what we need. He conveys intelligence and menace, control, anger, and a fair amount of compassion. We can identify the qualities that will get him out of Alcatraz as easily as we can those that might put him there. This film isn't an Eastwood vehicle like *Every Which Way But Loose*, but the strength of his presence is crucial, central to the film's success, and, like Siegel and Surtees, he does admirably subtle, controlled work. (The rest of the cast is no less impressive, in performance and appearance. Everyone, down to the extras, seems exactly right.)

Mention should also be made of the contributions of production designer Allen Smith and set decorator Edward J. McDonald, who refurbished the decaying prison, where most of the film (about 80 percent) was shot. The sets are so skillfully constructed and blended with the location work that the difference is never apparent.

Escape has the characteristics of Siegel's best work: convincing atmosphere and a natural toughness that is never forced or strained. He maintains the prison film tradition while providing a good deal of sardonic humor (thanks also to Tuggle) and the quality of mystery that grows from Morris and the question of his fate, a quality enhanced by Jerry Fielding's often eerie score, used so sparingly it goes almost unnoticed until the closing credits, where it appears against the bizarre shot of the smiling dummy head constructed by Morris for the guards to see "sleeping" at night. This closing shot, accompanied by the soundtrack, following a shot of The Rock under titles announcing that the three men were never seen again, is damned creepy, an unusually effective conclusion which embodies Siegel's complex mixture of moods.

Comparisons to his B classic *Riot in Cell Block 11* are inevitable, but *Escape From Alcatraz* also bears similarity to his *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. In the *Filmmakers* interview, Siegel says, "I remember seeing an old film interview with Warden Johnson in which he said, 'What's so bad about this place? The prisoners are kept separate, we've stamped out homosexuality, the food is good, and there's nothing to think about or worry about.' He didn't see anything wrong with the prison."

In an interview about *The Body Snatchers* (*Cinefantastique*, Winter '73), Siegel commented, "These pods, who get rid of pain, ill health and mental distur-

bance, are, in a sense, doing good. It happens to leave you with a very dull world. . . ."

In *The Body Snatchers*, Siegel created a world in which normality is frightening, a symptom of the conformity which is podism, and the end of humanity. Alcatraz is really no different, and McGoohan's warden ("We don't make good citizens. We make good prisoners.") is the same sort of spokesman for podism as Larry Gates's psychiatrist in the other film. Alcatraz is a pod factory, its dehumanizing effect taking its toll on prisoners and guards alike, and Eastwood's Morris is just Kevin McCarthy's Miles Bennell in prison fatigues, a little harder, owing to circumstances.

Pat Holmes

Hair

If the 1980s replay the economic upheaval and aftermath of the Great Depression, Hollywood will prosper. Its assembly line is already retooled for the 1930s and is prepared to reproduce movie history, decade by decade. Consider: shiny new models of *The Champ*, *Hurricane*, and *King Kong* have already rolled off the line. *Movie, Movie* and *New York, New York* revealed the adaptability of old designs. And supermoguls Zanuck and Brown are now rethinking the grandest vehicle of all, *Gone With the Wind*. Yet even Hollywood has its Edsels. These remakes draw moans not only from moviegoers but from the films' doppelgängers. Where, they wonder, is the spirit, the nutty flavor, of the originals?

Just when this genuine vitality seemed most elusive, along came Milos Forman's *Hair*. Unlike *The Godfather* or *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Hair* does not extend or replicate its genre. It does not contain film school graffiti, which today passes for homage. It is, rather, a luminous, zesty revival of the spirit of the earliest Hollywood musicals—all-singing, all-dancing, all-talking, and utterly "'30s" in structure and appeal.

Some parallels are slight. In *42nd Street*, before the narrative begins, the characters' images and names flash simultaneously on screen; in *Hair*, following the credits, the camera tracks rapidly forward to present, individually, the major characters. Other parallels are profound. *Gold-diggers of 1933* moves from the penniless chorus girls singing "We're in the Money" to the dirge-like "Remember My Forgotten Man"; *Hair* opens with the characters broke and closes with them mourning, in song, dead soldiers.

In the 1930s Warner Brothers musicals, as in life itself, society and the economy were paralyzed. Characters faced hunger, eviction, unemployment (just as audiences faced hand-me-down plots and threadbare characterizations). However serious, these problems were not oppressive. Despair and

defeat (stasis) could be driven out with a set of taps (kinesis). To move was to live, to project an indomitable human spirit. Unlike those in forties musicals, the artificial moments in thirties films were in the narrative. Movement, not talk, revealed the characters' emotions. For this reason, the thirties musicals paid scant attention to narrative and full attention to the dynamics of movement. This tension between stasis and kinesis links *Hair* with Hollywood's past.

No point better illustrates the emphasis given this counterpoint than screenwriter Michael Weller's simple dialogue. Very deliberately, it flattens ideas, characterization, and style. Here, for example, is a major confrontation between Berger, Hud, and Claude:

Berger: You wanna be a big hero with a gun? Big macho dude in a uniform? 'S 'at what you want, man? Eh? . . .

Claude: I happen to think you're ridiculous.

Berger: I am, man; I am ridiculous. . .

Claude: Just go on and you be ridiculous and I'll do what I have to do.

Hud: Who're you doin' it for?

Claude: I'm doin' it for you, man.

Hud: Hey, look, don't hand me that because if you're doin' it for me, don't, 'cuz if the shoe was on the other foot, I wouldn't do it for you.

This functional, if not dulling, dialogue does not define the characters. Neither witty nor witless, the dialogue is self-effacing. Static. In dazzling counterpoint, movement tells us who the characters are and what they believe.

Claude, Sheila, and Hud's woman are pivotal characters. Structurally they stand between the judge, the prison psychologist, Berger's father, the military policeman, the army general (static) and Berger, Jeannie, Hud, and Woof (kinetic). Each begins as a motionless onlooker. Stock-still and wide-eyed, Claude watches the "Age of Aquarius" unfold; seated, Sheila watches Berger's dance across the table ("I Got Life"); and Hud's woman calls out to Lafayette but walks not even a step towards him ("Easy to Be Hard"). Claude's and Hud's woman's first appearances are particularly forceful. Claude's values are as earthbound as his gait and his heavy suitcase. He moves without caution only once—when he captures the rented horse—and he dances only when Berger ("Manchester England") or workhouse inmates ("Hair") animate him.

Hud's woman is even more reserved in movement, thus more withdrawn from the group. She embodies a conservatism less in her plea for Hud's fidelity than in her rigid stance. Her refusal to move—physically—speaks to Hud and his friends in a language they understand. In lengthy, static close-ups, her immobility challenges their freedom. Berger's call to the open road, to liberating motion, ultimately moves these

three pivotal characters as it moves us.

Berger, of course, is central, the architect of the film's kinetic energy. In giving him the \$50 fine money, Claude acknowledges his superior ability to move. Whether stripping to swim, dancing down the street, or flying across the Franklins' dinner table, Berger moves joyously. Even when he urinates from the park bandstand, the sway of his back and the arch of his pee suggest a Roman fountain. Is it parody or homage?

Perhaps the film's most poignant moment occurs when Berger attempts to answer for Claude in a roll call. Ordered to be still, Berger dances like a pin ball, flipped out of one slot, then another, until he finds Claude's place and stands at attention. Such rigidity is momentarily amusing; however, this last kinetic burst proves to be a dance of death. Yet like Julian Marsh at the end of *42nd Street*, absent from the action, Berger has willed a grand design to his disciples, a legacy of free and graceful movement.

In the 1930s, two Great Depressions existed in America, one on film and one on the streets; on film, times were softer and solutions easier. So is it with the Viet Nam protest era and *Hair*. With all its movement, *Hair* is gentle. If characters kiss, it's on the cheek; if they make love, it's off screen. Romantic relationships—Sheila-Steve, Hud-Jeannie-Woof—could be mistaken for familial ones. The film barbs the rich, the powerful, and the established, but finally its satire is as innocent as the recruit's painted toenails. No joke is cruel, no character or institution pilloried. In this atmosphere, the chachacha, the LSD trip, and the occasional peace sign float out of time, ours and even that of the film. The result is 1930s fantasy.

Miroslav Ondricek's cinematography gives all this a warm, autumnal glow. Only six of the film's scenes and two of its musical numbers occur inside exclusively; the remainder occur in natural settings, usually late in the day. In numerous scenes the shadows stretch far, yet they are not sharp and hard. This near-dreamy quality pushes realism to the edge and eases the transitions from narrative to song. Elsewhere, the film is sure of itself. Other reviewers have appropriately praised Twyla Tharp's choreography, John Savage's clean performance, the deft editing, the lively score, and above all the director's unified vision.

Blessedly, *Hair* is dated: we've seen it all before. But rarely has it resurfaced with such freshness and verve. Milos Forman has magically redeemed our movie past for us, and the doppelgängers are dancing in the aisles.

Leonard J. Leff

Judex

Judex appeared (1963) during the one short period when foreign-language films got a fair distribution shake in this country. Director Georges Franju is widely admired

(though for other films), and informed cineastes generally have some idea of what he was trying to bring off with *Judex*, even if they only know of the film at second-hand. Thus, none of the rules for defining a "lost" or *maudit* film seem to apply. I only consider *Judex* terribly underrated. If it seems too vague a claim to call it perhaps the best world-wide release of 1963, let me more specifically claim that *Judex* is formally and successfully more innovative than the comparable fantasy-thrillers of 1963 (*Birds*, *Charade*, *From Russia With Love*), and that Franju takes the same formal techniques Resnais tried out in 1963 (*Muriel*) and is more technically sophisticated with them.

From its title alone, cineastes can infer that *Judex* derives from one WW-I cycle of Louis Feuillade's serials. The first critical point to make then is that Franju's film is not a "translation" (remake, sequel) but rather an "imitation." Franju, his writer Lacassin, his cameraman and set designer, culled characters, incidents, costumes, sets, and shots from his silent master. But as Tom Milne pointed out in his review (see *Credits* below), Feuillade's original camera effects were grounded on urban c1915 realism. Franju re-applied this style to produce a fairytale that occurs in its own cinematic "secondary" world. The brilliance of his success makes *Judex* too "light" for many academic reviewers. Conveniently, the film's visual style comes across precisely in promotion stills. I want to discuss the directly narrative inventions of the film; these involve editing and camera placement, and amount to a demonstration of how far one can go from the basic Griffithian grammar of film yet still be "cinematic."

Judex avoids both the moving camera and the isolation-closeup. Motion occurs within the original frame of the setup; commonly, "motion" or plot action is what happens implicitly, outside the frame of the setup or just before, just after, the setup's narrative point in time. Dialogue is functional. Jarre's soundtrack is, for a thriller, non-hectic. The overall film—a bundle of dopings, abductions, chases, blood-threats, schemes—is quiet, i.e., "silent."

The film's formal analogue is the prewar U.S. thriller comic strip (Caniff, Foster, Raymond). These artists worked under formal limitations comparable to Feuillade's or Franju's. Their strips were the technical model for Resnais's editing of *Muriel*; but reviewers took the stop-go cutting in *Muriel* more seriously, because Resnais was then the more modish director, and because his script had "relevance" to Algeria and colonial "guilt."

In fact, Franju and his team seem to have studied Feuillade (and perhaps the old strips) more analytically than Resnais did. *Judex* re-translates the jump cut from mere shock editing—which is all it was in films in the early sixties—back to a device for getting plot momentum. One quick incident

has a sympathy figure dumped off a bridge, rescued, brought ashore. The narrative-editing is from just *after* the dump to just *after* the shoreside rescue. From one viewing, my memory preserves a dreamy track along a clear stream, while the audience still expects to see the details either of a drowning or of a rescue.

One more example, to show how Franju eludes technical predictability: the plot incident concerns two Alsatian dogs' rescue, in a night park, of the doped heroine from two kidnappers. The scene's peripeteia, the action, would seem to require (in the textbooks) the precise opposite of what Franju manages: movement within the sight of a still camera, quiet, the ability of the dogs to manage an impressive threat by no more movement than one paw laid on the woman's prone body.

Judex is the type of film in which the characters are instrumentalist, not central; or let us say that they require certain characteristics, including physical beauty, that permit them to inhabit this kind of 90-minute fictional world. The "hero" (the Good Bad Man) is the US magician, Channing Pollock. He has the right good looks and formidable presence for this 1963 plot-line, where he is less Feuillade's Avenger and more predominantly the protective cavalier of the beautiful *maitresse*. Pollock gets one showpiece opening scene at a masked ball to show his professional talents; otherwise in a three-cornered conspiracy duel fought round the fair body and estate of the gentle widowed dove-like young Jacqueline (Edith Scob), he survives in the film on sheer presence. One feels Franju wanted his specialist talents on call.

The female-sex role is split three ways: between the passive bourgeoisie girl in White; the active villainess in various guises and disguises of Black, Diana (Francine Berge); and, Diana's nemesis, the activist girl in working-class (circus tights) Black, Daisy (Sylvia Koscina). Each plays her ordained role in the ballet.

Judex is only one in a series of underrated early sixties European fantasy films which used the nutriment of pop fantasy to explore afresh narrative-film syntax: *Death of Tarzan*, Has's *Saragossa Manuscripts*, the several features of the Czech Karel Zeman. (Has and Franju managed sequels in the mid-seventies, while the relevant marginalia film to this series—where a fantasy style is applied to a realist plot—is Alibiccoco's c1968 *Le Grand Meulnes/Wanderer*.)

Excepting Alibiccoco's, all these films are uncompromising fairytales. Since the American film academic still asks the realist-story convention as a "control" on a film's artistic seriousness, and since he still teaches the early sixties in terms of a few directors who got wide art-circuit distribution at that time, I have already bothered to show that on technical grounds *Judex* is more "serious" than *Muriel*. In fact, the film that *Judex* really devastates as a comparable

work of art is *Alphaville*: like *Judex*, a cinematographic fantasy-world constructed in the camera from shots of contemporary Paris. *Alphaville* is widely accepted as successful Grade-B Godard; what is immediately noticeable is Franju's enormously greater cinematic inventiveness and taste, beginning with the casting of Pollock versus Constantine. *Judex* versus *Alphaville* at once wrecks the academic party-line on European Film 1960-5, and makes its self-evident demand on our publishers for a new overall study of "The New Wave," this time mentioning the right directors.

CREDITS: most useful, since it adds review sources, is Walt Lee's *Reference Guide to Fantastic Films*, 1973 ("G-O" vol.), p. 234. The most interesting contemporary English language review is probably Tom Milne's *Sight & Sound*, Summer 1967, p. 144. In the early 1970's Franju shot two concomitant sequels to *Judex*. These are the telefilm, *L'Homme sans Visage*, and the theatre-feature, *Shadowman*. *Shadowman* got London release in 1977.

J.M. Purcell

The Brood

Without a doubt David Cronenberg's *The Brood* is one of the most grotesque films ever made, not only in terms of the special effects the film employs (which identify it as another in the recent series of "organic" horror films), but also because of the social criticism implied by the film's plot. Child abuse and the vogue for "humanistic" psychotherapy are the subjects of this film, and though the second has been parodied to a great extent (but never with the pure rage of Cronenberg's pictures, which follows to its logical and gruesome end the implications of these therapies), one is disappointed to see that a "cheap horror film" is the first to deal with the former more sensitive, subject.

That Frank Carveth (Art Hindle) is a somewhat unpleasant hero for a film draws our attention further to the bitterness of this portrayal of contemporary life. He is not a "hero," but merely the central character. The psychic torment that his wife Nola (Samantha Eggar) suffers has been passed down from her mother Julianna (Nuála Fitzgerald) and her soap opera-like marriage to Nola's father (Henry Beckerman). At the film's conclusion there is the clear statement that Frank and Nola's daughter, Candy, will carry on this complex of rage and guilt that Hal Raglan (Oliver Reed) exploits so well in his therapeutic method.

The film (beautifully photographed by Mark Irwin) begins with a demonstration session between Raglan and his patient Michael. From the *plan américain* of the opening it is not immediately clear what's happening, for in the role-playing that Raglan encourages, he has assumed the role of father to Michael, tormenting him with his failure to live up to the father's expect-

tations. All the basic psychological elements at work in the film's troubled characters, and which Raglan purports to heal, are summarized in this scene: a child's mixture of love and hate for a parent, who is also enacting an inherited melodrama of love and hate. Michael is encouraged to "work through" his pent-up rage, whereupon the rage will be dissipated and the patient will be free. Raglan stirs up more than he cures, however, for not only does Michael get warts, and have the desire to burn himself with cigarettes (playing "daddy"), but Jan Hartog (in a brilliant character turn by Bob Silverman) gets cancer—though here the visual statement is made that Hartog's cancer may actually be caused by a constant indulgence in junk food—and Nola, who was to be Raglan's supreme vindication of Psychoplasmics, and yet who turned out, rather, to be the most horrific condemnation of it, becomes a monster-baby machine, her mind and body at war over the frustrations of the past sustained over a long period in a body that cannot bear such a burden without severe physical damage, all of which is due partially to self-loathing, but which is also an indication that there is no dissipation of the rage with which Raglan is so obsessed. The portrayal of Raglan is more subtle than it first appears. He is not just a cruel exploiter, in that he believes that his form of therapy works, and he shows an understanding of, and a sympathy for, other people (for example, his handling of the scene made by Nola's father); though he speaks psychobabble ("that's a really heavy accusation, Frank," spoken as he tenderly fluffs his hair before a mirror), he is also emotionally tormented, and acts bravely as his therapeutic dream deteriorates before him.

Frank is the weakest character in that, compared to what we learn of the others, he remains a blank. He acknowledges his own normality while talking to Candy's teacher (Susan Hogan)—Nola married him for his sanity. He does not seem to be offered as a measure of healthy "normality" in that he is hotheaded, stubborn, and uses people; qualities that are "normal" enough, but which are rarely offered as admirable virtues. Frank serves as a surrogate for the spectator, but the spectator would rightly feel insulted if asked to identify with him (as if identification were necessary to appreciate art). He is more interesting for what he brings out in others: the self-pity of Nola's parents, Nola's self-disgust (which she projects onto him), the extremism of Candy and the patients at Somafree, Raglan's defensiveness, et cetera. He is a screen on which the characters project the judgments they hesitate to make explicitly on themselves. As Nola's mother says to Frank at one point, "One second after we're born we have a past. After 30 seconds we lie to ourselves about it." Frank's mental health is not "explained" (if need not be), but, given the relentless neurosis of the society at large, one wonders how he has kept from



The Mid-Torso of Inez: Jim Blashfield.

becoming neurotic as well.

Either *The Brood* is a film made by an artist blithely dismissive of the basic rules of commercial cinema, or it is the work of a dreadful hack who has, while attempting to make a suspense film, flubbed every shock and filled the screen with talk rather than terror. Early in the film it becomes obvious that the murders are somehow connected to Nola's anger and resentment, since they are preceded by a therapy session between her and Raglan. A viewer may come away with the feeling that the film is not very scary, which it isn't. If, however, instead of comparing the film to some Platonic standard that dictates action, development, and pace (God forbid that a film ever be "slow"—the most handy insult directed at a film one doesn't understand), one merely absorbs the aesthetic experience for what it is, one will be that much more rich. (It is incredible that after years of gradual increase in the area of film studies such a plea must still be made.)

As a horror film, *The Brood* is a flop. The "horror" itself is ridiculous, especially if it is meant to be taken as realistic (frightening), rather than as a measure of Nola's psychosis. The suspense scenes startle rather than shock. The violence is exploitative (and I am coming to think that all film violence is exploitative, without exception, either as a cynical presumption of the audiences' taste, or as a sick manifestation of the artist's most easily communicable urges). But the simple craftsmanship is of a high level. Cronenberg is not a director who has distinguished himself in the past, his films being merely vulgar, unlike, say, Romero's, which seem like blueprints for films not made for want of bigger budgets and prettier people. In the past Cronenberg's ideas have been unclear. But here, with an excellent cast and a beautiful score by Howard Shore, Cronenberg begins to grapple with issues key to the survival of our civilization, ideas and issues which will linger long

after the final sad fade-out.

Charles Schwenk

The Mid-Torso of Inez

Jim Blashfield's 1979 film is a beautiful and humorous example of the cinema of enigma, meditation, and stream-of-consciousness. Within its 24 minutes it recreates, in luminous black and white photography, the dreaminess of leisurely reminiscences on a rainy afternoon.

The film is a series of vignettes structured around an old man's tales of his past told to his granddaughter. The sequence of events is clear: the Narrator arrives and eats with a family, after which he begins talking to his granddaughter, Lois Ann, and describes in flashback his younger self attempting to solve the mystery of a package of photographs which he receives and which seem to remind him of certain incidents from his even earlier past when he had some mysterious job that he has been trying to forget. He asks his landlady, Mrs. Ashley, about the package, and visits his father to ask for advice. After several interruptions by sequences of shots of a disturbing allegorical quality, each of which ends in a long fadeout, the young version of the Narrator decides to confront Mrs. Ashley with the package. In the present, the Narrator is put in a trunk by two men and driven away in a Packard as Lois Ann looks on, and thus the film ends.

The Narrator's father is writing a novel, the words of which we see typed out on the bottom of the screen when the Narrator comes to visit him. There is a tracking long-shot of the Narrator as he crosses a bridge, then an abrupt cut, with the Narrator now walking in the foreground, walking in the opposite direction, as the Narrator says: "I called upon my father with some trepidation, seeking his help." When we see the father for the first time, these



The Mid-Torso of Inez: Richard Blakeslee.

words are the first words typed. "There he is now," the Narrator tells us, "working on his endless novel. Every day he crumples up the pages from the day before and starts all over again." The film is such that one can begin at any point and work toward an analysis. Here several key elements intersect. First there is the repetition, the father beginning afresh every day, as well as the slight indication that this Beckett-like redundancy is not an attempt to achieve anything, but rather the effort to avoid something else. There is the theme of the artist reworking the past, as well as a genuine playfulness with narrative. There is the fascination with mechanical things, and the feeling of exclusion based on language; for example, the father writes, "Listen up. I heard a dog bark and pledged my love. I became distracted and found myself in a place I never should have been." The viewer is excluded by this nonsense, just as elsewhere in the film the viewer is excluded by the private business lingo of Magpie as he talks to someone on the telephone: "... tell Laurie I broke in those end soles for her like she asked, huh? And get the lion down to market and pick up half a dozen of that low grade. Oh it doesn't seem to make any difference... I don't know, I guess it's just the usual stuff. Say, the boys over at Thimbles have been raving mad over its variance," et cetera.

Though the Narrator is ostensibly telling a story to Lois Ann, he seems actually to be struggling with haunting episodes from his past. The young girl seems to take seriously the witty if far-fetched tales of this eloquent, if eccentric, relative. But when certain clues to his true past begin to emerge, doubts as to his honesty, with himself and others, spring forth. In the package there is a photograph of a girl standing next to a huge dead fish—a "monster" produced by the "sleep of reason"? Or an oblique reference to *La Dolce Vita*? The Narrator claims to know

Hemingway: "It was no surprise to have Gertrude Stein drop in for an hour or two, or even Ernest Hemingway in his younger days, before he became... well, difficult. Do you remember Ernest Hemingway, Lois Ann? ... I enjoyed his stories so much, Lois Ann—as long as they were not of a sexual nature." Are these delusions of grandeur, or a simple creative blending into his own autobiography the life stories of famous others? And there is the theme of sexual inhibition; he does not want to hear sexual stories. Inez, whose forearm we at least positively see at one point, and who may also be the blonde woman seen washing her face at the beginning of the film, is someone to whom he has never spoken, much to his regret.

Other mysteries and clues (of true beauty) abound. A woman is shown lying in bed beside the head of a buck whose antlers are displayed prominently, a complex "symbol" at once both Freudian and Buñuellesque of the virile, of the headstrong, of the pacified, or even of a lured and entrapped lover, echoing the beached fish. Later, the young Narrator finds blood and plumage in the hallway outside his door, creating the feel of certain Surrealist paintings of Dali, Ernst, and Magritte. At one point the young Narrator is shown splashing and floundering ineffectually with a rubber raft, attempting to navigate the shallows of a river, a measure of the Narrator's inability to deal with both the problems of his life, as well as the true narrative that he is distorting or misunderstanding.

The photograph of the girl on the beach is later "re-enacted," but with the quality of a time period different than that of the static and brittle picture's. The Narrator also recounts his discovery of a secret passage behind the stove in his room, from which emanates strange noises. But here as elsewhere, his *Alice in Wonderland* explorations uncover no "real" explanations

for the oneiric phenomena he encounters. He does not, however, view his experiences and neighbors with the strangling paranoia that haunts, for example, Trelkovsky in Polanski's *The Tenant*. For all the dark shadows that are present, the film is not gloomy, despite a sequence, at the film's end, that shows, as if in a fantasy, the Narrator as a victim of a flamboyantly stylized prank in which he is put into the back of a Packard in a trunk by two men, and unceremoniously driven away. Is this an allusion to Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, or the Narrator's own wish in the face of the dread past he re-hashes?

And who is Inez? Her "mid-torso" may be a reference point, a mental landmark, a Proustian sense-memory at the center of the Narrator's life. He says, "But I wondered, as I watched, what turn my life would have taken had I seen Inez as someone I could have touched." The ambiguities, like those of the films of Maya Deren and artist Joseph Cornell, are fascinating, creating levels of metaphor that, despite how much they can be transformed, nonetheless still suggest some ultimate solution, like a complex puzzle. Obviously there are some things the Narrator prefers to leave unsaid. When he looks through the grill at the end of the tunnel behind his oven, he says, "Do you mind terribly, Lois Ann? Do you mind if I don't tell you what I saw?" She presses upon him, nevertheless, to give her some hint. He does not, preferring to leave his half-hidden life to be pondered by others. But, like the comical rubber tires mentioned in the film, his past refuses to remain buried, the "truth" emerging tantalizingly as an allegory of the creative life, using the distortions of memory to investigate the desire to forget. "Unfortunately, the tires began to appear in the garden about this time, along with the dented cans..." (As the reader may know, rubber tires will not stay buried, but gradually rise to the surface.)

With its intriguing images and lovely photography, Blashfield's rich and engrossing film is worthy of several viewings. Art that is this evocative and demanding is rewarding to those who view with patience and care.

The film can be rented from the Northwest Media Project, P.O. Box 4093, Portland, Oregon 97208. Russ Isanti

Books

Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films

Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, Trans. Stanley Hochman
Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1979

Little needs to be said about the importance of Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol's

Hitchcock (Editions Universitaires, 1957) as the first major work devoted to one of the cinema's acknowledged master creators. Unfortunately, however, the original text in French remained out of print until 1976, when the Editions d'aujourd'hui, in its admirable efforts to reproduce texts of quality and rarity, chose to reprint it. Until then, few film scholars had access to the seminal work. Now, with Stanley Hochman's excellent translation, those who previously were forced to rely on others' assessments can make their own evaluation of the controversial book, as well as appreciate the originality and audacity of the text that led the stunning reversal of critical attitudes towards the work of Alfred Hitchcock.

The short but extremely significant book by Rohmer, leader of the Young Turks at the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and Chabrol, the sometime contributor to the influential magazine, marked the apogee of a critical campaign to rehabilitate and elevate the work of the New Wave's admired auteur. Their mission had begun in the late forties, then within the pages of the short-lived *Gazette du Cinéma*, and continued at *Cahiers* with the critical terrorism and idealism characteristic of their youthful zeal. Each of the New Wave critics—Rohmer, Chabrol, Francois Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, and Jean-Luc Godard, along with their converted friends—contributed to the fundamental revolution in attitude toward the filmmaker whose talent up to that time was deemed technically masterful but not "serious." *Hitchcock* was the first and only book-length work devoted entirely to a single director that the auteurs at *Cahiers* produced, and it summarized not only their critical attitudes about the master moviemaker, but also the practices and methods of the *politique des auteurs*.

Jean Mitry, director of the "Editions d'aujourd'hui" collection published by the Editions Universitaires, approached Chabrol and Rohmer to do a book on the controversial filmmaker, the former especially for his reputation as Hitchcock expert and "metaphysician." They divided the work simply: Chabrol took the English films and Rohmer the American, and each went off to work independently in his own corner. Rohmer recalls that Chabrol brought him factual information about Hitchcock's American career, and he freely admits incorporating the latter's ideas on *Rear Window* and other films¹; Chabrol remembers *Notorious*, *Stage Fright*, and *Rebecca*. Rohmer's treatment of *I Confess* also summarizes Chabrol's major points in an important article, "Hitchcock devant le mal" ("Hitchcock Confronts Evil") and Rivette's and Domarchi's ideas (the confession and literary density, respectively) on *Under Capricorn*, thereby synthesizing many of the shared Hitchcocko-Hawksien notions about the British filmmaker's work.²

Their introduction states the purpose

and method of the book and expresses the basic auteur preoccupations: a) careful chronological scrutiny of Hitchcock's work as a developing, maturing, and evolving aesthetic *oeuvre*; b) the thematic and stylistic consistencies throughout the filmmaker's work; c) the pedagogical aim of familiarizing the reader and teaching him to appreciate and admire the director in question; and d) the continuing defensive attitude required in the face of critical opposition and skepticism. The co-authors remained sensitive to the assessment of Hitchcock as a "master technician" limited by his superficial and entertaining subjects, and responded:

After *Suspicion* it would be said: "He showed his limitations. He's only a shallow virtuoso, a technician and not a true auteur." We have already had occasion—and we will again, for such is the purpose of this study—to reply to these accusations. (p. 68)³

But the most significant contribution Rohmer and Chabrol made in their modest 159-page tome was their dogged insistence on, and demonstration of, Hitchcock's rigorous formalism. They perceived a "formal postulate" that informs each of Hitchcock's films, and that made him

one of the greatest inventors of form in the entire history of cinema. Perhaps only Murnau and Eisenstein can sustain comparison with him when it comes to form. Our effort will not have been in vain if we have been able to demonstrate how an entire moral universe has been elaborated on the basis of this form and by its very rigor. In Hitchcock's work form does not embellish content, it creates it. All of Hitchcock can be summed up in this formula. *This is what we wanted to demonstrate.* (p. 152)

The book covers each of Hitchcock's films in chronological order from the unfinished *Number Thirteen* (1922) to his latest film at the time of publication, *The Wrong Man* (1957). It provides general career information and development with general critical and box office reception. Plot summaries dominate the commentary on the earlier films and remain in each film's treatment, providing the reader with a rough idea of the characters and action of those films he may not have seen. The general tendency in Chabrol's section on the British period (1922-1939, roughly one-third of the book) is to pick out consistencies in themes, characters, plot development, and the use of motifs with Hitchcock's later films in mind as a demonstration of the continual growth and evolution of the artist. Because of the plot summaries and brief critical accounts—usually quite evaluative—Chabrol's section reads much like a series of quick film reviews that note the work of actors, writers, and cinematographers. In the second two-thirds of the book, Rohmer devotes approximately thirty pages to the first American period,

from *Rebecca* (1940) to *The Paradine Case* (1945)—12 films—and twice that number of pages to the period beginning with *Rope* (1948) and ending with *The Trouble with Harry* (1956)—10 films. The conclusion consists of an eight-page treatment of *The Wrong Man*, the longest analysis of a single film. This latter period clearly holds greater interest for Rohmer, since he designated each film with a title that refers to its formal principle: *Rope*—"The Conquest of Continuity," *Under Capricorn*—"The Secret and the Confession," *Stage Fright*—"Virtuosity," *Strangers on a Train*—"Figure and Number," et cetera. It is not surprising that the best analyses appear in this third of the book, where Rohmer makes a deliberate effort to work out the informing structural principle he perceives (with Chabrol's help) in each film, since, according to the *politique*, an auteur's work progresses in ascendancy, not degeneration.

Both major sections of the book reflect the very different tones of each of its authors. Chabrol's treatment of the English period communicates a more overtly impressionistic, judgmental, sometimes subtly humorous, superficial, defensive and unanalytical attitude, while Rohmer's section belies a more sedate, Catholic, moral, and scrupulously analytic seriousness of purpose. Chabrol claims to perceive, and tends to evaluate films on the basis of, their sincerity of intention and the relative amounts of commercial factors in play, thus preferring *The Ring* and *The Manxman* from the silent period, and *Murder, Rich and Strange*, and *The 39 Steps* from the British sound films, and casually ignoring the more critically and popularly successful *The Lodger*, *Blackmail*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Sabotage*. Rohmer, on the other hand, adopts a much more objective and analytic approach to each film under scrutiny, concerning himself more than Chabrol with discerning the rigorous application of the formal postulate, its relation to the moral concerns of a given film, and consolidating the thematic development and Catholic worldview in Hitchcock's evolving American career.

Two notions that critics generally shared about Hitchcock's career were: 1) the filmmaker's strongest creative period was in Britain; and 2) Hollywood had a disastrously negative effect on his talent. Most agreed that Hitchcock's Gaumont-British association contained his very best work, better than anything he had done before or after. This period from 1934-38 claimed such esteemed works as *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The 39 Steps*, *The Secret Agent*, *Sabotage*, and *The Lady Vanishes*. As can be expected, Rohmer and Chabrol did not agree. They preferred an earlier, less well-known and less acclaimed period in Hitchcock's career:

If we had to choose the "golden age" of the English period, we would go against current opinion and designate those years of his collaboration with

British International rather than those of the Gaumont-British period (1934-1937) that followed. (p. 12)

The films of this preferred period include *The Ring*, *Champagne*, *The Manxman*, *Blackmail*, *Murder*, and *Rich and Strange*. Not only did the Young Turks disagree on which period of Hitchcock's British career was superior, they also pretty much regarded the whole period as his apprenticeship years during which he sketched out his major thematic and aesthetic preoccupations before blossoming into maturity in America.

The established critics had decided that Hitchcock had sold out his talents when he answered the call of fame and fortune in Hollywood. They missed the films of his later British period in view of the slick Hollywood productions he now directed. But Rohmer and Chabrol saw Hitchcock's move to the United States and his first film there, *Rebecca*, as a crucial stage in his artistic development. In his British films he could not find what he sought, but

Rebecca is something else again: the first manifestation of a mature talent. It is not at all surprising that this maturity coincided with Hitchcock's arrival in America: leaving his usual surroundings acted as a catalyst.

With *Rebecca*, the "Hitchcock touch," which has previously been merely a distinguishing feature, becomes a vision of the world. Spontaneity submits to a system. This is a critical moment for an artist, for he must not develop tics, a pedagogical fury. Hitchcock was to avoid these traps. From now on, the two poles of his future work—because we can now talk of a body of work—are clear. One is fascination, moral captation—in other words, depersonalization, schism; in psychoanalytic terms, schizophrenia; in philosophical terms, amorism; in Baudelarian terms, the assumption of evil, damnation. The other pole is its opposite: knowledge—or more exactly, re-knowledge—of self, unity of being, acceptance, confession, absolute communion. (p. 58)

For all its deserved importance, *Hitchcock* also suffers from some of the more suspect by-products of the New Wave critics' intense sincerity and youthful idealism in the defense of their auteurs and *politique*. Rohmer's and Chabrol's defensive positions often result in a perverse tendency to defend at length the critically and commercially unsuccessful films of Hitchcock's career, and to glide over those films that had received greater critical and financial success. For example, after a brief account of how Hitchcock came to make *The Lady Vanishes* and a plot summary, Chabrol simply states: "It's an excellent English film, an excellent Hitchcock film" (p. 54). He clearly is concerned with what he considers the lacunae and injustices wrought by con-

temporaries, and therefore does not feel obligated to defend the films they tout.

Among the vast majority of critics Rohmer and Chabrol perceived a gross lack of understanding and a grave "error in perception" in the assessment of certain films, so much of their defense of Hitchcock's work is aimed directly at the establishment critics' position. For instance, critics generally viewed *The Manxman* as superficial and later the subject of *Notorious* as "banal" and "nauseous." Many, they contended, had created a wrong idea of Hitchcock in the first place, and then used that idea against him when their expectations were not met. In the case of *Downhill*, for example

Contemporary critics were greatly disappointed by the film; however, their judgment now strikes us as severe and unjust. Obviously, these critics had formed a false idea of Hitchcock (nor was this to be the last time that would happen!) and they held the director responsible for not confirming that idea. However, those of us who see *Downhill* today find a number of fine qualities in it, and it is possible to prefer it to *The Lodger*. (p. 10)

Later in the book, Rohmer credits Hitchcock with *knowing* the critics to be guilty of misplaced aesthetic standards:

While *I Confess* was not a disaster, it was not as successful as its director had hoped it would be. Hitchcock was less surprised than on previous occasions. He understood that those who liked his works liked it from the wrong reasons. (p. 119)

With the same logic, but in reverse, Chabrol sees *The Man Who Knew Too Much* as not meriting the critical and popular reception it received:

...in spite of its many good qualities, the first version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is somewhat irritating and unsatisfying.... Critics and public, having finally been given a Hitchcock that resembled their idea of him, applauded enthusiastically. (p. 40)

Chabrol, especially, also severely criticized the "prestige film" garnered approval by the critics and success with audiences because of presold qualities that had nothing to do with Hitchcock's real mastery of the medium or his development as an artist. Of his film version of Sean O'Casey's successful play, *Juno and the Paycock*, he disdainfully claimed "Hitchcock settled down to the job unenthusiastically, and what was at the time greeted as a great film now seems like something done as a boring experiment" (p. 25). He bases his negative judgment of *Sabotage* on what he speculates to be Hitchcock's *intentions* in making the film—one of the grossest and most consistent faults in the whole critical attitude and treatment in the book. Chabrol believes that Hitchcock deliberately chose

to make a "personal prestige film," that is, a film that would give completely everything the critics and the public expected from him.

After having sifted the critical articles about him, the faults found with him, the praises showered on him, he created a second personality that completely corresponded with the idea others had of him. (p. 47)

Of course, Hitchcock maintained perfect awareness throughout of what he was doing and what would result—an academic, cold and gimmicked film—claims Chabrol, but one that would assure the continuation and commercial success of his career. Chabrol sees Hitchcock stacking the deck in the conception of *Sabotage* by 1) picking a work by Joseph Conrad (*The Secret Agent*, a novel not to be confused with Hitchcock's film of the same title), an author who was not only literary, but "classic" as well; 2) adapting it with sufficient fidelity as to avoid accusations of betrayal, but leaving enough freedom to apply his own signature to the film; and 3) realizing a *mise en scène* that demonstrated Hollywood-style virtuosity while maintaining a "British chic." "For the first and, happily, the last time in his career, Hitchcock condescends to the public instead of raising the public to him" (p. 50). As a final slap in the face to the utter incompetence of the assessors of Hitchcock, Chabrol closes his treatment of *Sabotage*, a film he carefully dismantles into an exercise of critic-and-audience-pleasing formulae that Hitchcock executes, with

We too soon afterward sink back into a "quality" film of the kind that probably gets that label from the fact that it is overly afraid of making mistakes. It's easy to understand why *Sabotage* is the Hitchcock film preferred by those who don't like Hitchcock. (p. 50)

As has been indicated earlier, Chabrol indulged in interpolating artistic intention in interpreting Hitchcock's career and work, leading one to believe that each critical and commercial failure caused Hitchcock to select and make his following film less personal and more suited to popular taste, which then resulted in temporary artistic regression. Assessing the effect of *Rich and Strange's* failure, Chabrol finds something

paradoxical about the fact that this popular film director never managed to get his most daring, his most candid, works accepted. The failure of *Rich and Strange*, like the later failure of *Under Capricorn*, undoubtedly prevented him from continuing along a path that he nevertheless knew was promising. If we consider Hitchcock's overall career until now [1957], it immediately becomes apparent that all his films tend to blaze or consolidate a new trail, and that just when things are about to take off, a commercial failure checks his élan and forces him

to look elsewhere. His most sincere works, such "pure films" as *The Manxman*, *Rich and Strange*, *Under Capricorn*, and most recently *The Wrong Man*, were culminating efforts, whereas to Hitchcock's way of thinking, they should have been points of departure. (p. 35-36)

The criterion of "sincerity" in making a "pure film" operates as a fundamental principle of the unformulated aesthetic the authors apply in their evaluations of Hitchcock's films. Rohmer and Chabrol never pronounce the word "compromise" even when a film overtly seeks to win public approval; "concession" is the most they allow. Naturally our critics prefer the films they consider to be artistically "pure" and personally "sincere," which tend to be those that fail critically and commercially. They blame critics and audiences for not appreciating the aesthetically more daring and in their view superior films, and for preferring the ones in which Hitchcock has been forced to bow to popular taste. Rohmer and Chabrol have difficulty hiding their disgust for commercial concession and make their feelings clear; at the same time, however, they cannot abandon their total commitment to Hitchcock the auteur, which creates a tension that remains unresolved throughout their book. *Hitchcock* clearly reveals the tendency of the New Wave writers to identify personally with their idolized auteur hero to the point of projecting their own ideas of aesthetic intention. While suspect as a critical method or attitude, this interpolation of creative intentions demonstrates their own desires to become themselves auteurs of the cinema. The future New Wave filmmakers often referred to this ambition and their critical writing continually confirmed it.

One of the most frequently cited characteristics of *Hitchcock* concerns the Catholic orientation of its interpretation of the Jesuit-schooled British filmmaker's work. Although some consider this underlying religious bias a negative aspect of the book, it clearly opens up a whole level of abstract moral and metaphysical considerations previously unsuspected by most critics up to the *Cahiers* auteurs' exegesis of Hitchcock's films. Our critics were quick to point out that Hitchcock was not a moralizer, but a *moraliste* in the French sense of the word.

The relations between people, the concept of the couple, of the family, of adultery—all contribute to the designation of Hitchcock as a Catholic auteur. But he refuses and will continue to refuse to sermonize, to proselytize... (p. 25)

They were equally convinced, however, of Hitchcock's profound Catholicism: "...there is not one of Hitchcock's films that is not more or less marked by Christian ideals and symbols" (p. 113). More than just seeing Christian symbolism and problems of religious morality in Hitchcock's films, our critics recognized a Catholic-

formed mentality similar to theirs at work in the filmmaker's creation of morally ambiguous characters beset with complex ethical and psychological problems from which they ultimately must extricate themselves by means of some act of good or bad faith.

Two films stand out as constantly recurring references in this regard—*Under Capricorn* and *I Confess*. Among the Hitchcock enthusiasts at *Cahiers*, these films were "unknown masterpieces," a sure indication being their critical and commercial failure. The merit of these two films rested almost entirely upon a Catholic reading; in the case of *Under Capricorn*, Sam Flusky (Joseph Cotten) and his wife Henrietta (Ingrid Bergman) live a "solidarity in sin," a phrase Rohmer and Chabrol applied initially to *I Confess* in describing the relationship between Father Logan and the murderer who confesses his crime to him in the confessional. Henrietta's murder of her brother has been transferred to and assumed by her husband for her own protection, and now both share in the guilt—a guilt Henrietta wears as a mantle of madness. The only solution is the confession:

"The secret subject of this drama, wrote Jacques Rivette, is *confession*, the liberation from a secret, liberation in its double meaning: in the psychoanalytic sense, because it frees us from memory by giving memory a verbal form, and in the religious sense; in this case the confession of sins is the same as their redemption." (p. 98)

Father Logan (Montgomery Clift) in *I Confess* is caught in a moral web formed by the inviolability of the confessional, his priesthood romance, and blackmail over that romance.

His sin, if there was, is not that he has been a man before becoming a man of God, but, on the contrary, to have given way to the intimidation, the blackmail, of wanting to be redeemed by heroic and paradoxical conduct what need no longer be redeemed: to give way to the temptation of martyrdom. (p. 116)

There is no denying that Rohmer and Chabrol's Catholic bias provided an interpretive approach that led to a much more subtle and complex appreciation of Hitchcock's moral universe than had ever been articulated before.

Rohmer and Chabrol offer many acute, often brilliant, perceptions and suggestions for further investigation and analysis. If their brevity leaves much to be desired in rigorous and methodical analysis, it also offers some astonishingly perceptive ideas that were to prove seminal to all the subsequent critical writing addressed to Hitchcock's films. Here, in two sentences tucked unobtrusively in the introduction, are enough possibilities for thematic study to fill an entire book:

But it is always a mistake to separate

content from the means of its expression, and in the case of the man who made *Rope*, the problems of form and substance are especially closely connected. The idea of the "exchange," which we find everywhere in his work, may be given either a moral expression (the transfer of guilt), a psychological expression (suspicion), a dramatic expression (blackmail—or even pure "suspense"), or a concrete expression (a to-and-fro movement). (p. ix)

The auteurs at *Cahiers* rarely elaborated their thematic discussions beyond mentioning key themes and their recurrence in a director's work; the same holds true for delving into the psychological and moral aspects of characters who reappear in the filmic worlds of an auteur. They preferred to approach an auteur's worldview through his personal style and form, and through the intimate interplay between style/form and content.

In the brilliant analysis of *Strangers on a Train*, Rohmer reaffirms the crucial formal logic of Hitchcock's creative method:

As we have pointed out, it is in the form that we must look for the depth of the work and that form is heavy with a latent metaphysic. It is therefore important to consider Hitchcock's work in the same way we would that of an esoteric painter or poet. The fact that the key to the system is not always in the lock, that the doors themselves are skillfully camouflaged, is no reason to insist that there is nothing inside.

We must follow through to the end; it is not enough to disclose a certain fetishism of situation and objects; we must also look for the relationship that unites these same situations or objects. We must go back to the purest essences of Figure and Number. (p. 107)

It would be unjust to render Rohmer's entire treatment of *Strangers on a Train* in summary form, but its basic formal skeleton rests on this geometric figure:



, a turning circle and a straight line of movement going in both directions. Upon these forms the moral complexities of the theme of "exchange" can be interpreted in all its variations suggested by each appearance of the circle (tennis ball, glasses, neck, merry-go-round, madness, et cetera). In the spirit of challenge to established views of Hitchcock, Rohmer exclaims:

Those who care to are free to insist that these different motifs of the straight line, the circle, the back and forth motion, the whirling motion, the number two, and the color white are to be found in this film completely by chance. (p. 109)

Rohmer and Chabrol's acute sensitivity to *mise en scène*—the potentially creative and all-encompassing job of giving visual

realization to a script—sometimes proves a mixed blessing. On the one hand it results in picking up on the key features of directorial and visual style, not necessarily an easy feat since although the same cinematic technique can be used by anyone, the “right” and “only” way to use it happens only when an artist invests it with meaning in an organically aesthetic manner. On the other hand, it sometimes leads to dwelling upon favorite shots, touches, or moments in a given film. In the latter case elaborate descriptions often merely express the ecstasy a “misty-eyed auteurist” feels when he sees his favorite director at his best without being able to verbalize the source of that feeling or to integrate it into an interpretation or analysis. Chabrol demonstrates this speechlessness in his section on *Young and Innocent*, of which he had little more than this to say:

In addition, *Young and Innocent* has the most beautiful forward track to be found in the history of film: the protagonists enter the ballroom of a fancy hotel in which the murderer is probably hiding; though the spectator has previously seen him, all he knows about him is that his eyes twitch.⁴ The camera, mounted on a crane, is some forty yards overhead and follows, in a short pan, the entry of the young people into the ballroom, at the far end of which one can see a black orchestra playing a number while couples move about the dance floor. The camera begins a slow, oblique descent, as if searching to frame the orchestra. It does frame it, and it continues to move forward until it takes in only a portion of the orchestra, then only three musicians, and finally only a single musician: the drummer. The camera comes closer still, until only the drummer's face is on the screen. The camera searches for his eyes, finds them, and isolates them. The eyes twitch.⁴ (p. 52)

One feels the genuine delight and admiration expressed in such descriptions, the frequency of which belie the real interests of Chabrol—in this case, brilliant stylistic invention. Whatever their motives, the overriding sentiment of enthusiasm and commitment to defend Hitchcock aesthetically that dominates *Hitchcock* invests their clearly valuable critical insights with the devotion of youthful crusaders. More importantly, the text itself offers the proof of the potential wealth of formal analysis developing from the “formal postulates” that Rohmer and Chabrol propose, a wealth that remains undiminished despite the impressive scholarship succeeding their own initial contribution.

FOOTNOTES

1. Related to the author in an interview with Eric Rohmer, Paris, January 7, 1978.

2. Rivette's article on the importance of the confes-

sion in Hitchcock's work as well as the notion of “transfer of guilt,” entitled simply “*Under Capricorn*,” appeared in *Gazette du Cinéma* No. 4 (October 1950), p. 4. Chabrol's “Hitchcock devant le Mal” (Hitchcock Confronts Evil”) and Jean Domarchi's “Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu” (“The Unknown Masterpiece”) appeared in a highly controversial special issue of *Cahiers du Cinéma* devoted to Hitchcock: No. 39, October 1954. This issue was turned over completely to the Hitchcock-Hawksiens by co-editors André Bazin and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, despite their own reservations about the Young Turks' critical position and methods.

We can assume that in general the New Wave writers agreed on most of the judgments made in *Hitchcock*. The only real disagreement might have arisen over Hitchcock's attitudes toward misogyny and homosexuality. Chabrol saw *Murder* as the first in a triptych that treated homosexuality in moral (*Murder*), realist (*Rope*), and psychoanalytic (*Strangers on a Train*) terms. In his section of the book, Rohmer cautions against being too fascinated by either misogyny or homosexuality as keys to Hitchcock's work, preferring to regard them as two of the innumerable vices and temptations to which the filmmaker's characters fall prey.

3. Quotations are from Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, *Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films*, trans. Stanley Hochman (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1979). Page numbers in the text refer to this translation.

4. The original text reads, respectively, “il cille de l'oeil droit” and “L'oeil droit cille.” Both translate as “his right eye twitches” and “The right eye twitches.” If memory serves correctly, the camera moves in for an extreme closeup on one eye only and when it blinks in a nervous tic, the whole tension of the sustained shot dramatically explodes the screen. I am unclear as to why Mr. Hochman makes this change.

Lindsay Michimoto

Les Contes Moraux D'Eric Rohmer, Marion Vidal, Pierre Lhermineur, Editeur, Paris, 1977, 168 pages, illustrated.

Including myself, everybody American I know who is seriously knowledgeable about films has wanted to write something ambitious about the films of Eric Rohmer. Therefore it is almost with regret that I must advertise in this review that to have a good book on Rohmer available in English, our film-book people need only have a translation done of Marion Vidal's critique of the “Six Moral Tales.”

In this study, the many illustrations are relevant (partly because of Rohmer's fantastically sharp casting); through *Marquis D'O...* (1976), her filmography is elaborately complete; the writing is good; and her bibliography (by, about) seems excellent on French language sources. She also cites a few English language sources, though not the Rohmer chapter in James Monaco's *New Wave*.

When Rohmer first became “visible” over here with *Mon Nuit Chez Maud* (1969), he was very gratefully received along the art-film circuit. As well he might be, with his films combining as they do literacy, physically attractive people and surroundings, great formal narrative sophistication, and finally the greatest harem of beautiful-actress parts after Bergman and Satyajit Ray. Some few bits of Vidal's book are regrettably influenced by the noises of the ineffable Joan Mellen: noises peculiarly irrelevant to Rohmer's

films. These films are not morally indulgent about male sexuality, they are not misogynistic, and in any case they provide marvelous professional showcases for his actresses. A woman—a Frenchwoman!—capable of Marion Vidal's critical prose has no business being influenced by American academic jargon, at least until the American academic comes up with a film-maker able to provide US actresses with the same career opportunities Rohmer has provided his.

The chapter-by-chapter analysis of the six *Tales* occupies most (pp. 29-150) of Vidal's book. But, as she is alert to point out, Rohmer did not discover (could not afford?) his key technician, the cameraman Nestor Almendros, until the 1967 *Collectionneuse*. Almendros has since had the same consequential importance for Rohmer's oeuvre as Coutard for Godard or Burks for the American Hitchcock. So Vidal critically makes *Tales* 3-5 (1967-72) separable from both *Le Signe du Lion*, the first two, shorter *Tales* and all the other early film work. In fact, even for *Collectionneuse* she makes a kind of advanced apprentice work—surely too tough a judgment on this breakthrough film?—and *Claire's Knee* a retrogression from *Maud* and *Chloe in the Afternoon*.

I should call *Claire* the test case for one's appreciation of Rohmer, the same way *Eclipse* is for Antonioni; but such arguments with her should come later.

Her book must now serve as the starting point for any general American discussion of Rohmer. It definitely replaces, for example, Monaco's useful chapter. Monaco critically underrated Rohmer, by comparison to the *copains* Truffaut and Godard, to an impossible degree. And historically Monaco failed to grasp that Rohmer was critically more dominant on *Cahiers* than either Godard or Truffaut, and not, as Monaco suggested, a kind of over-30 hanger-on at the magazine.

Miss Vidal first reassures us of the detail of her scholarship, for example, through information about Rohmer's set behavior. As a critic, she relaxes us by page 9 with an excellent summary of the paradoxical aesthetic effects in the films. (This passage gets reprinted in the back-cover blurb). One is only surprised that she never mentions by analogy Bresson, while describing Rohmer's ability to apply moral and literary styles from the past to contemporary fictions, to produce his many formalist effects within the naturalist convention. (And to be the sexiest contemporary director under conventional handcuffs, no US director would accept.)

To pass along a little of her factual information: “Eric Rohmer” is Maurice Scherer. Aside from signing some of the *Cahiers* criticism, Scherer pseudonymed a 1946 novel as “Gilbert Cordier” and a 199 Ph.D. thesis on Murnau (published 1977 by “Rohmer”), and now teaches film academically. “Rohmer” published the *Contes Moraux* in 1974 as prose stories, not

as screenplays. One of Vidal's most relevant critical points is that Rohmer sees himself as adapting the published stories very closely, the way a director might be "faithful" to Proust or Shakespeare.

So the aesthetic subversiveness of a Rohmer film derives from his self-identification as a prose writer whose medium is the screen. (As Astaire's '30's dance numbers may be seen as using the screen as a medium rather than being, as dances, "cinematic," cf. Arlene Croce.) In any case, Rohmer historically reasserted the filmed work at a point in time and fashion even more anti-intellectual than usual among our film critics; *Maud* was as badly needed a film in 1969, as *Potemkin* or the Gene Kelly musicals were when they came along.

To continue with her straight aesthetic criticism, Miss Vidal has useful things to say about sources, *et cetera*, but it would not be misleading to say she concentrates on Rohmer's themes and just as much on the importance of the archetypal female character in the *Contes* who tempts but who doesn't get the hero. Indeed, one of her reasons for distinguishing *Tales* 1-2 from 3-6 in the sextet is the argument that the break in production time between 2-3 (1963, 1967) was marked by a social break in French upper-class young-girl mores, that makes Suzanne (1963) a different kind of girl than the "parallel" Haydée (1967). On the other hand, the "temptresses" of 3-6 (1967-72) make a group, and are the people in the films with whom Vidal identifies.

For any reader who has seen the films, everything Vidal says is helpfully argued and interesting. I think her interpretative approach underrates the formalist (not thematic) innovations of the films, even to the point of missing a plot point or two. On the importance of the rejected "second" heroines, she is simply refusing critically to accept the fact that *Tales* 3-6 are all unquestionably mindscreens of the male lead. So Vidal's identificatory ability to write vigorous criticism about the "bad girls" — cf. Kael's empathy with the Moreau character in *Jules and Jim* — is counterbalanced by Vidal's, misleading the reader about how cinematically effective are Rohmer's "white" "passive" heroines: the ones the hero (and the audience) desires.

It is part of the psychology of courtship that the sexually active male mentally "flattens" the personality of the pursued girl, 2-D's her as a dream lay. (If he wishes the girl to "lead" in this social dance, we recognize Narcissus who wishes to be the dream lay!) The films deal precisely with this ordinary fact of social life by having the "active" part of the girl's life occur round the edges of the film. Françoise's previous love affair (*Maud*) emerges in (as) the epilogue; and, more strikingly, the imperceptive husband in *Chloe* had not yet, by the end of the movie, surmised what second reason his wife may have for weeping at his unexpected afternoon-return home.

(Rohmer's later plot-switch, in *Marquise*, has of course a main plot incident whose cause neither hero nor heroine ever identify, only the audience.)

Marion Vidal simply refuses to accept, in other words, that if the hero in *Maud* really preferred "Maud," both he and the style of the film in which he appeared, would transform his "Maud" into a "Françoise." This is the point of the film's epilogue: that he will continue to treat his wife as a "Françoise," even after learning of the "Maud" part of her life. This bugs Miss Vidal. What she leans towards demanding of Rohmer is a film where Rohmer's temptress is the one making the choice between a (male) "Maud" and "Françoise." Fair enough: in the thirties, MGM used to shoot her plot five times a year for Crawford and Shearer, but this kind of film remains distinct from what the six *Tales* are trying to do.

Vidal's concentration on theme and character prevents her more generous acknowledgement of the purely formal achievement of the films as narratives. It also leads her to preferences and aesthetic value judgments, among the 1967-72 "Big Four," that are "wrong," i.e., that I dispute. Correctly, she makes *Maud* and *Chloe* one kind of film, and the two "summer" movies (*Claire*, *Collectionneuse*) another. But this matter of subgenres she confuses, like worse film critics, with proving a value judgment that the summer films are inferior to the other two. She most likes *Maud*, I would say, but most "admires" *Chloe*, because it's thematically a little more complex. (I most like *Claire* and most "admire" *Maud*.) But as I remarked, she should, in her chapters, have appreciated the films' formalism a little more.

If her reader has not yet, for example, seen *Collectionneuse*, he cannot learn from Vidal how much more interestingly and sophisticatedly its soundtrack manages the technique of the unreliable narrator than does its probable source-influence, Hitchcock's *Stage Fright*. Rohmer's game is not to defer to some childish cynicism in the film's audience, but on the contrary to make this audience take the narrator seriously enough to react (and laugh) when the visuals qualify or contradict what he says. Her chapter on *Collectionneuse* shows, of course, Miss Vidal aware of this "game." I only think she owes Rohmer more critical brownie points for his success at it.

Thus while I agree with her in rating *Claire* superior to the other summer film, there is an unacknowledged (by her) technical problem in that its male protagonist never persuades the audience to take seriously enough his professed beliefs, explaining his behavior towards the honeybun ingenue; so this time the soundtrack gets no recognition laughs. Rohmer's extra switch, this time, incidentally, is to frame the "first-person" male narration as supposedly the fictionized invention of his woman novelist companion, Aurora. Once again, my point

is not that I see anything in Rohmer that Marion Vidal misses, but that she takes too little seriously such new formal inventions of his.

What she apparently wants, is both to appreciate Rohmer *per se*, yet aggrandize him in some way for what she herself calls an Americanized "liberation" movement. I think such proposals would wreck the films formally or, the same thing in another way, transform them. In my own way, I am as utilitarian a critic of Rohmer as she is. I'd prefer for example that the excellent film version of *Claire* spelled out as clearly as the 1974 prose-story version does, that all the affluence and elegance of the story is bankrolled by Western power-class liberalism, career jobs in the European part of the UN, hence the concentration of private entanglements and emotions, the lack of any ideological confrontation among a large group of characters, is because they are all on the same payroll and can't afford intellectual confrontation and adult argument. (Rohmer's films get deep self-identification from American academics.)

This spelling-out of the social situation, which I want, would turn Rohmer into a satirist; and probably be suggesting a moral separation between him and *Claire*'s society that really doesn't exist. It would be phony, like Antonioni's upper-class Marxism. So I'm as wrongheaded as I think Marion Vidal is. His post-*Tales* films (*Marquise*, *Perceval*) certainly indicate he is intellectually ambitious enough, so ambitious as not to remain merely our best contemporary cinematic novelist of manners.

J.M. Purcell

L'organisation de l'espace dans le "Faust" de Murnau.

Eric Rohmer,
Unin Generale d'Editions, Paris, 1977,
illustrated.

Eric Rohmer's thesis (U. of Paris, 1972) on Murnau's last pre-Paramount German film has been available from a Paris publisher since 1977. It is a remarkable piece of film criticism, and stimulates so many useful applications outside its chosen topic, that I had better spare a few concentrated words for *Faust* before I take up some of these applications.

Faust and the whole great German-silent industry are likely to seem a bit *démodé* to us, and not simply because of the current generic prejudice among US film students against silents. At first sight, the twenties German film seems a used-up research area. Enough of the movies, it would seem, play the film-society circuit or get taught in courses. Furthermore, the late twenties American industry made an especially vigorous effort to absorb its styles and techniques into standard international-Hollywood practice. Finally, there was so much economic kidnapping of key Berlin personnel that to this day historians treat Lubitsch, Jannings, Wilder, and Murnau

himself as "American" film-makers.

Yet the fact that most of us have probably not had the chance to see the film which Rohmer discusses, is a reminder that simple crude ignorance of the German cinema goes back much further than the postwar blacklisting of Riefenstahl, to avoid hurting the feelings of our media Stalinists. And it may also be suggested that our film societies and courses may be emphasizing the wrong German silents. *Caligari* is too amiable and, deep down, really too unpretentious, for us to complain about its nonsensical treatment as a major "classic." (Its survival as such seems to depend on our inability, over here, to see the great WW-I Feuillade serials of which *Caligari* is only a derivative Expressionist rip-off.) But to take an inclusive example, how many people have seen any of the famous Fanck mountain films, except possibly Pabst's *White Hell of Pitz Palu*? Yet to omit the Fanck series from the history of the German twenties is as bad as a course in the 1940-50 American decade that forgets to mention the MGM musical. Murnau's career alone is pocketed with films, including one US title, that are written off critically only because they're unavailable. We conclude that the research problem with silent Germany is the same as for pre-twenties Hollywood or 1961-5 Europe; our academics either haven't seen the right films, or simply promote the wrong ones.

What's past is prologue. Let me now turn to Rohmer's brilliant monograph. Coming after his collaborative *Hitchcock, Spatial Organization in Murnau's "Faust"* establishes him as not only a more important director than Truffaut, but a more important critic, at least between book covers. A blurb is more difficult to make credible than a putdown review; so if I say *Spatial Organization* belongs with the best of Bazin, I may help my argument by saying that my enthusiasm concerns only about 30-odd pages of Rohmer's whole text, mainly Chapter one. The rest of his thesis—charts and technical stuff about shot layouts—is in fact hard slogging, not only if one has not yet seen *Faust*, but if one has not seen any Murnau film at all. Rohmer is using *Faust* to explain the special nature of Murnau's effects and style; the visual means from which derives the whole momentum of his films: what early reviewers of *Last Laugh* tried, inadequately, to describe by mentioning that it had no subtitles. (The subtitles in *Sunrise* became part of that film's narrative flow, and the later film would lose something without them.)

If we discount the extended appendices of shot-breakdowns, Rohmer's theoretical argument breaks into three parts and chapters. These are labeled for the three kinds of "space" that Rohmer finds "in" films. He calls his three spaces: pictorial, architectural, and cinematic ("filmic"). "Pictorial" (I) means, what is represented, the referent: "content," if you like, but Rohmer doesn't really think "content" is a category

in a film.

"Architectural" means the internal visual organization of the shot. "Filmic" is used—contrary to all the stock associations of this term now—to denote, not some abstract "form," but rather the spectator's reconstruction in his own mind of the shot and of the film: a reconstruction for which both the referent (I) and the shot's spatial organization (II) serve only as "fragments," i.e., partial components. The film exists, literally, in the spectator's head: what Hitchcock keeps trying to tell his interviewers before they all get back to talking about Hitch's little-boy moments in jail, or how Kim Novak was not miscast as a Woman of Mystery in *Vertigo*. Real (virtual) cinematic space is therefore mental, not what's on the screen (though this mental space can't exist without what's on the screen).

I begin with Rohmer's remarkable analytic argument about film-space because it seems to me at once to demonstrate how the best pages in his book advance the consideration of fundamental matters in film theory beyond the swampy level where our opinion-makers try to mire them. Even somebody of Ingmar Bergman's capacities is supposed to refer to ordinary film components like the plot as "24 lies a second." In his critical achievement, Rohmer is not even argumentative, only suave. He makes it look easy, just as his own films make the comedy of manners, or the historical romance, look so easy that for tastes like Kael's they aren't "serious," the way Altman or Paul Newman or *Fingers* is "serious." The browser in *Spatial Organization*, it seems to me, can gut this book simply by reading the preface and Chapter One (through page 42), with a quick look at pp. 106-13, where new ground is broken on the stage actor-screen actor question. The rest of the book serves the subordinate function in his thesis-argument of footnotes. But Chapter One will surely be translated and anthologized for the next academic casebook on Murnau, alongside the pages of *Sunrise* in Everson's *American Silent Film*.

The spine of Chapter One ("Pictorial Space") is Rohmer's proposition about the particular technical developments in European painting, early Renaissance on, that he thinks influenced Murnau's camera. I should interject that Rohmer, the critic, is not one of those dreary cineastes who drags Beckett and da Vinci into a discussion of Tom Mix or Lou Costello to reassure us that he, the critic, is "serious". Rohmer's claims about the influence of Murnau's sets and lighting of Caravaggio, Vermeer, Altdorfer, and Tintoretto are historically serious claims argued from real evidence.

This approach to Murnau's films, in terms of the sources for its imagery, means that Rohmer is formally lecturing us on the history of representational European painting, and therefore that his most interesting direct film criticism *per se* appears only as paragraphs or even *aperçus*. In one

paragraph (page 28) he explains, for example, what goes wrong with nearly every big film epic ever made. He argues that after everybody gets through making the sets and costumes look suitable, they shoot them in a camera style the equivalent of what is meant by the "academic" style in painting.

Chapter One's historical proposition is that the gravitation in painting techniques towards photography occurred not in the 19th century, but in the 16th-17th; that what in Holbein, Rembrandt, *et cetera*, involves a new realism was turned by later painters into a stylization of the painter's subject further from, not closer to, camera effects. Since Rohmer's whole argument is subversive of received opinion on the connection of early cinematography with contemporary painting, it should be read in his words, not mine. The point is, when he goes back to some 17th-century painters to find sources for *Faust's* imagery, this is not an attempt to turn one 1926 German silent into "high art" by association, but rather Rohmer's specific example for a general argument about painting and film.

The art history and the theorizing in Chapter One are part of a critical attempt at describing a directorial style. (Rohmer deals with the key technical credits for *Faust* on pp. 12-13 but from then on, like the rest of us, uses the director's name to denote the operation of a commune.) Murnau's style is defined as the shaping of forms by lighting; the shaped form being generally a body in movement. What Rohmer is discussing is what I would call the vertiginous effect that in *Sunrise* and *Last Laugh*, for example, seems to "pull" the reader right through the whole film from first shot to last, as in a good animation.

The Stanley Kramer type of film student would describe Chapter One's picture of *Faust* as uncompromisingly "formalist," as in the general formularization of a film's "matter" as being form, page 34. In fact, Rohmer thinks of Murnau as a realist filmmaker, like Rossellini (page 42), and what Rohmer has in mind regarding Murnau's technique is the integration of his effects; so that the momentum of his films comes not from his very simple plots but from the spectator's not being held up by "breaks" in his perception of a Murnau film, either between scenes or within single shots.

The composition of Chapter One alone required formidable qualifications in its author: sufficient knowledge, first, of Goethe and of Goethe's *Faust*—such as the cover art on the original edition, and what is known about Goethe's visual intentions, taste, and knowledge. At one point, the reader, as said above, gets a concise lecture on 400 years of technical development in European painting, as seen from the bias of the film historian. Still more uncommon in this kind of theoretical book on film, Rohmer actually knows enough film history, for instance, that for most silent classics like *Faust* there is no single *authori-*

tative print for the scholar, no "first edition" (page 40).

In fact, Rohmer's qualifications, including a decent prose style, are so various they might even buffalo the rest of us from trying to "read" Murnau critically; at least until we notice that *Faust* makes specialist demands distinct from those needed to discuss *Tabu* or *Last Laugh*, or until we notice that in *American Silent Film* William Everson does an excellent job on *Sunrise*, starting from an amiable middlebrow aesthetic base, but knowing how to write and knowing enough about movies.

It goes without saying that *L'organisation de l'espace dans le "Faust" de Murnau* becomes, with Lotte Eisner's biographical work, one of the two essential books on Murnau in Western film criticism. One trusts that, unlike *Hitchcock*, Rohmer's later book will not have to depend, for the next 22 years, on illegal xeroxed translations for the monolingual American film student. This new US edition (which I am willing into existence) will presumably include photo-reproductions of some of the paintings important to Rohmer's historical argument, to go with the shot-sketches printed by his French publisher.

The "M. Scherer" cited in the bibliography is, of course, Rohmer himself under his real name, Maurice Scherer. Second, the pp. 106ff. remarks on film acting, which I mentioned above, say (be it remembered that Rohmer is a working director) that the silent camera photographs different movements than does the sound camera. It was this area of refocusing one's performance for the early-sound camera that caused the unsettled effect in many early-sound films that reviewers and audiences noticed, but found hard to describe, not immobile cameras, ham acting, or bad voices. Once again, Rohmer revolutionizes film history in a few pages.

Finally, any film study by a famous director is bound to be read autobiographically, and there are whole pages in *Spatial Organization* where the reader can substitute *Marquise d'O.* or *Perceval* for Murnau's films, and in general treat much of the book as a theoretical study of Rohmer's films. I don't think that as a critic Rohmer "loses" Murnau, but his critique certainly has this extra autobiographical interest.

J.M. Purcell

Music

by Daniel DePrez

INCOMPLETE GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS

The beginning film composer, or any serious student of film composing, must learn more about film editing than anyone

involved with production except for the editor and director themselves; it goes with the job. The consensus derived from many interviews with film composers is that fewer than 10 percent of the directors working can speak to a film composer in even simple musical terminology.

It is possible, to be sure, for a film to be successfully scored with a director who does not have a B.A. in music. However, just as the serious film scholar or student director must learn a pan from a dolly shot, or the meaning of such terms as "day for night," that same scholar or young filmmaker has no reason not to learn a bit about a segment of filmmaking as important as film music.

Below are some examples of basic music terminology, with some modern musical jargon added. The terms were selected on the basis of their likelihood of coming up in a discussion between director and composer.

p *a capella*: singer(s) unaccompanied.
a *tonality*: music composed outside of the diatonic or chromatic scales.
bar (measure): both terms are used to describe a metered division of musical time.
cadenza: passage (usually near end of song) where instrument or singer may improvise, unaccompanied.
chromatic: scale proceeding by half-steps, 12 steps to the scale.
counterpoint: combination of two or more independent and complete melodies.
diatonic: any scale which proceeds by whole steps and half-steps, eight notes to the scale.
dissonance: two or more notes not in harmony.
dominant: "V" chord, based on the fifth step of the scale.
downbeat: first beat and/or accented beat of measure.
enharmonic: two ways of writing the same musical sound; the musical equivalent of an homonym.
forte: musical marking for "loud."
glissando: slurred slide from one pitch to another.
harmony: combination of two or more notes which agree with one another according to a set pattern.
hold (fermata): "bird's eye" marking, shows that note is to be held at conductor's discretion.
key: musical format outlined by note on which scale will begin.
major: scale formation, type of key most familiar; "do-re-mi,"

beginning on any note, outlines a major scale.

p *melisma*: notes added to melody, but not replacing them, added by performer.
minor: alteration of major scale, taking third note and lowering it a half-step; tends to sound more melancholy than major.
modulation: transition from one key to another.
motive: musical theme of a composition, melody connected to particular character or situation.
octave: particular diatonic scale of eight notes; same note sounded simultaneously at two different frequencies.
piano: low in volume.
pizzacato: instruction to pluck strings of instrument with fingers.
resolution: move from dissonance to harmony.
rest: sign showing measured pause.
staff *stave*: five-line group on which notes are written.
sub-dominant: "IV" chord, based on fourth step of scale.
suspension: dissonance created by holding one or more tones while other notes progress into new chord.
tonic: "I" chord, based on first step, or root, of scale.
triplet: group of three notes played in time of two.
unison: two or more voices sounding same pitch simultaneously.
voicing: particular placement of necessary notes in a chord or harmonic passage.
vamp: improvised accompaniment to musical action, sometimes repetitious; musically "treading water."
walking bass: bass line moving up and down by steps, most often heard in jazz and blues. ♪

Photo credits: Jim Blashfield: 52-53; Peter Cowie: 35-36; Pat Holmes: 49, 64; Ted Mahar: 45; *Moyer Theatres* and Donald Vel-des: 61-63, cover; *New World Pictures*: 63; Leland Poague: 3, 6-32, cover; *Twentieth Century-Fox*: 47; *United Artists*: 40-43, 64.



Recueillement

by Johannes Lucas

DIABOLO MENTHE

First there is childhood, with its freedoms and frustrations, hardships and pleasures, followed by adulthood, with its thin thread of a theme of the search for that which we have lost, or never experienced, in the transition from one to the other. We enter adulthood despite ourselves, barely noticing it, and with our physical age at variance with our self-perception: that of a youth with a life ill-lived that provides an inadequate preparation for the empty and sober realm of maturity, toward which we nevertheless scurry, and in which sadness is lifted only by the pleasures wisdom can perceive.

To dispense with opinion quickly: Diane Kurys's first directorial effort, *Diabolo menthe*, deals in an evocative, intelligent, and moving manner with this period of transition. The film was released by Gaumont in Paris in December of 1977, but not in the US until the summer of 1979 (with the title "Peppermint Soda") at the very moment the actress/director was editing her follow-up film, *Molotov Cocktail*. Kurys was an actress for a decade before making her autobiographical film, with such roles as "Charpillon filles" in Fellini's *Casanova*.

The more one sees the film, the more

one becomes impressed with its elliptical style centered on tiny scenes, often shot in the seemingly detached, single-take manner of the *nouvelle vague*. Of course, the aid of cinematographer Phillippe Rousselet and editor Jöelle Van Effenterre was probably crucial, and the score by Yves Simon supplies a tangible amount of the film's texture. For example, rather than using over-familiar Beatles songs to evoke the 1963-64 time period (in any case, the rights to the songs would have been well beyond the film's budget), such songs as Cliff Richard's "Living Doll," various French pop tunes from the time, and "Yiddish Mama," are used, as well as M. Simon's own beautiful themes and concluding *chant*. Here is an example of the film's flow and subtlety: Frédérique (Odile Michel) has had her love letters from Marc discovered by her mother (Anouk Ferjac), who then forbids her to see him any more. Later, on the day she has learned that she has psoriasis, the mother returns home to discover that Frédérique and Anne (Éléonora Klarwein) have staged a small surprise birthday party for her. Then, in the scene immediately following, in her lycée, Frédérique tells a friend that her mother has allowed her and Marc to spend Easter vacation camping. The accumulation of these "banal" and daily incidents expresses the nuance of richness of human relationships

(in this film, amongst the principals). Did Frédérique, who otherwise obviously loves her mother, throw the party to butter up her mother in terms of Marc? The direct cut implies the possibility. There is also Anne's complex relationship with her divorced father (Michel Puterflam). She tells one of her friends at school that her mother's boyfriend is actually her, Anne's, father, perhaps because it is easier this way than to explain things, or perhaps because the boyfriend, Philippe, is more handsome than her bald, ineffectual father. She dislikes Philippe, however, and sulks over the absence of her real father. When M. Weber appears after school one day, both Anne and Frédérique treat him callously, with Anne extorting the promise of a ski holiday out of him, perhaps as a measure of his love despite his absence, or as a competitive triumph over her sister.

There is also the theme of Anne's emerging sexuality, shown through her crush on Marc, which is shattering for her when Frédérique casually dumps him, her lies about her period, which also expresses her impatient desire to grow up more quickly, the sexual misinformation divulged to her in the schoolyard, her yearning for stockings, the hawk-like neighbor from whom she always runs (and who, sickly-looking already, apparently dies later in the film), and her small triumph at the party in the suburban garage, where Xavier (Yannick Laski) gets her a drink and pastries, and walks her to the train station, where, after a few still moments of silence and romantic talk (Anne: "Do you like living in the suburbs?" Xavier: "Yes, but tonight I



wish I lived near you."), the train pulls in, obscuring our vision and allowing Anne the privacy in which to experience her first kiss. Frédérique, the more experienced sister, is also interesting, with her love letters and her eventual dissatisfaction with Marc, expressed so movingly on her face in the snapshots from their camping trip, her momentary "lesbian" experience, and her crush on Muriel's father (Robert Rimbaud), who is one of the few males in either of the girls' lives able to live up to delicacy, the fragility and yearning that is the keynote of their experience. As an audience we may "identify" with same sex characters, but opposite sex characters represent that to which we aspire to love, eliciting from the spectator the most poignant and inchoate emotions.

Politics, always handled better in European films, becomes increasingly more important as the film goes on, beginning with a bit of graffiti on a wall ("OAS=SS"), and culminating in the classroom description by Pascale (Corinne Dacla), a beautiful monologue, on the anti-OAS Charonne march in February of 1962, and the subsequent funeral march for the seven people who had been killed when the police attacked the marchers, one of the deceased being the 16-year-old Daniel Féry,

an incident in French history somewhat like the US's Kent State killings, but with a radicalizing, rather than enervating, effect on the French people. (For an historical annotation to Pascale's account, see Janet Flanner's *Paris Journal 1944-1965*, Harvest, New York, 1971, pages 511-512.)

The structure of the film, then, is more precise than it at first appears, and, fortunately, film references are kept to a minimum: *Summer Holiday*, a British film with Cliff Richard from 1963, *The Great Escape*, and Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups*, (with which Kury's film has a complex relation), Vigo's *Zéro de conduite*. Though the final freeze frame of Anne looking back from the sea to her sister Frédérique is clearly based on Truffaut's film, one is tempted to say that Kury's shot is more beautiful, especially for those who always find women more interesting than men. A film such as this one seems impossible in the US, not only because of the difficulty of finding financing, and the sense of shame and cynicism that would lead a film-maker to create either a "message" film or a childish piece of vulgarity (qualities destructive to art in any country), but rather because there is something richer in the European ambience and experience that allows an ar-

tist's unself-conscious interest in the "small" as universal, which is not as a rule better than American punch and grandeur, merely missed over here. Rarely in recent American films can one find, as one does in *Diabolo menthe*, such a wealth of excellently acted, vivid two-dimensional secondary characters, so important to a film's texture. This captures the vividness with which we remember youth, though in many cases it is so much more flat, as we discover in those rare moments when we can reexperience something from our past.

Ultimately, however, one can give up trying to explain why one likes a film, and not even want to try and share the truth of those exquisite, ill-defined feelings one has during the hypnosis of cinema. There are always personal reasons that can never be stated, aesthetic pleasure being never fully free of autobiography. An art work gives us a vision of good and bad, subtle as it may be in the text. The mother, for all her breadth of character, is unconsciously "immoral," and in this film characters who admit to adult uncertainties are presented positively (Muriel's father). Perhaps this is what gives the film its occasional feeling of settling old scores. The mother slaps Anne in the face at the onset of Anne's first menstrual flow, with the explanation that, according to custom, now she will have rosy cheeks for the rest of her life. Yet at the film's end, the mother is rubbing beet root juice into Anne's cheeks so that her father, to whom she is seeing the girls off at the train station, will not think Anne is too pale. Thus the mother is "wrong," that is, her behavior is not endorsed, in that she causes Anne pain and confusion, and destroys for her an intimate and exhilarating moment. On a never fully conscious level the world views of artist and audience may mesh and create the emotional sympathy that energizes loyalty to a work of art. Or perhaps, once in life one was in love with someone who resembles the heroine of the film, and in that multi-layered world of movies, the fictional Anne, the actual actress, and the personal past all meet in the emotional Onanism of unrequited love, where the sterile release of frustrated feeling soothes one in the regenerative shadows of cinema.

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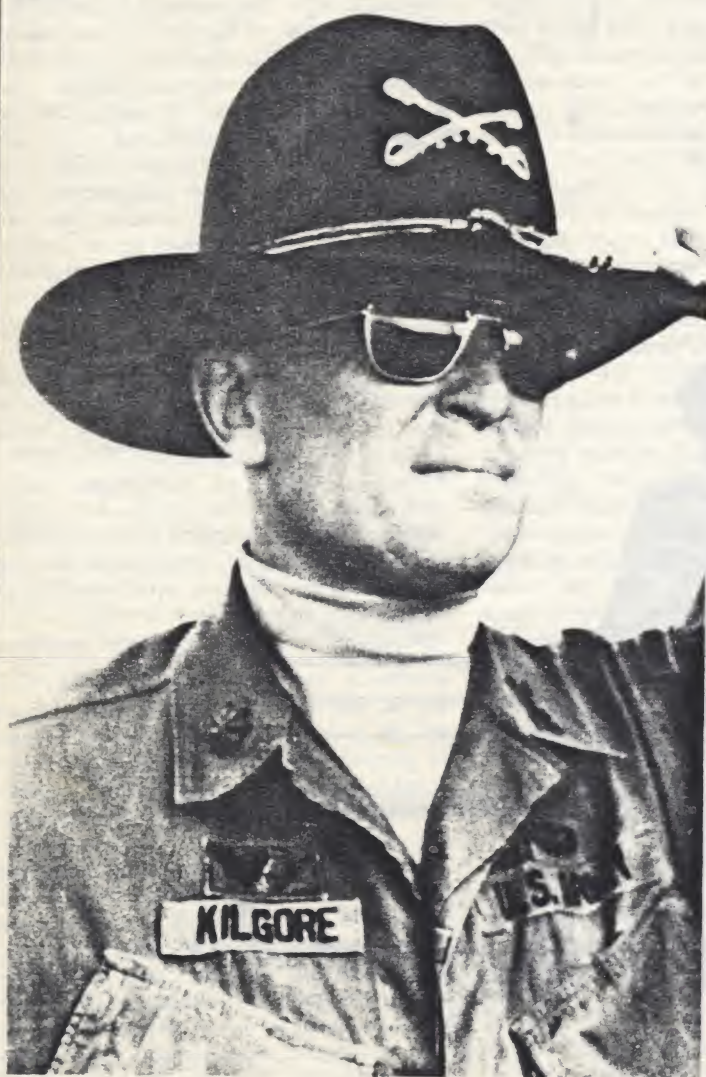
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